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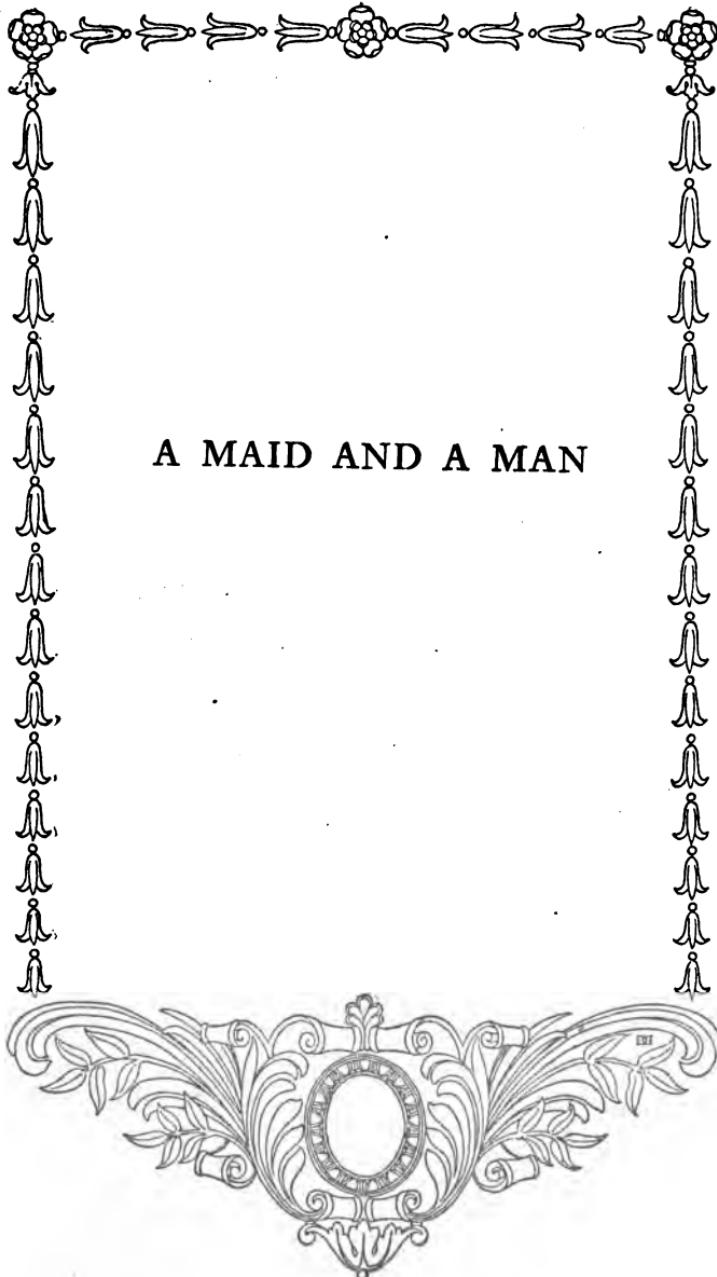




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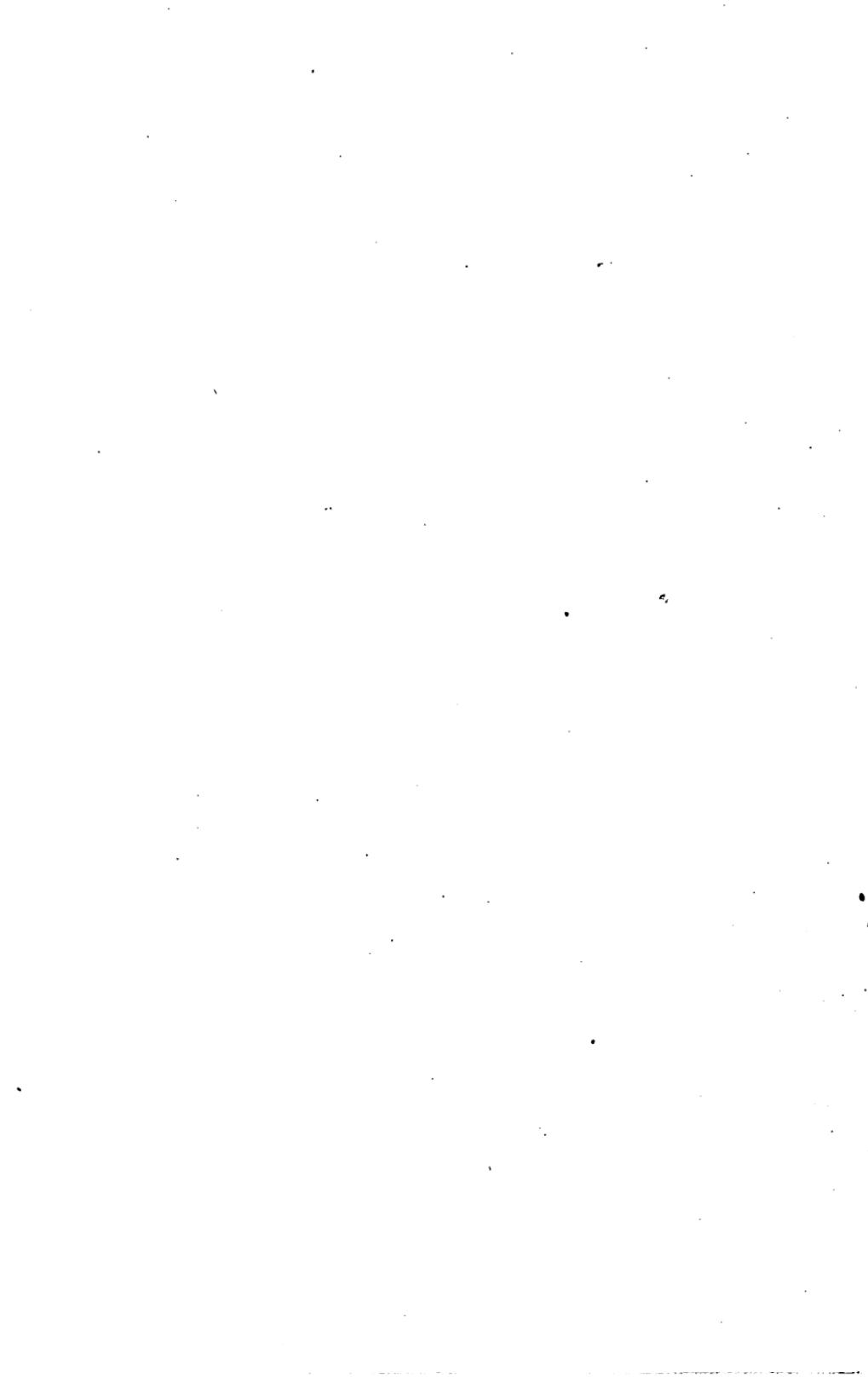
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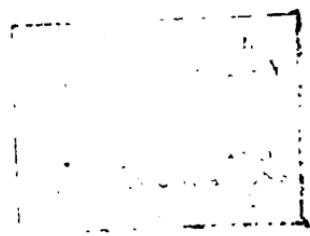




A MAID AND A MAN









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A MAID AND A MAN

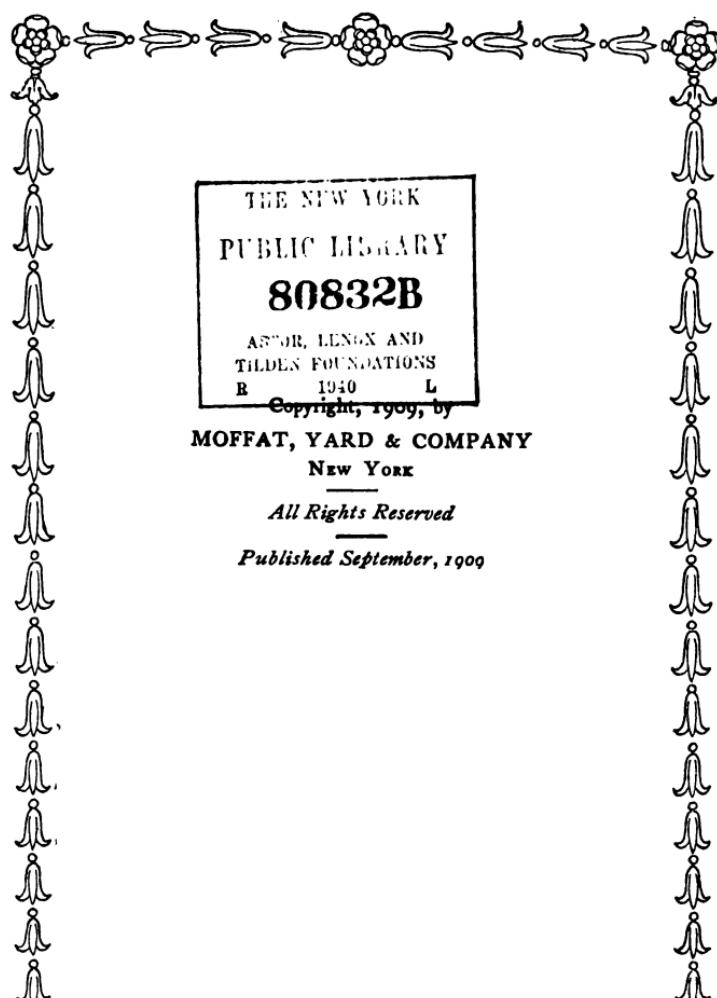
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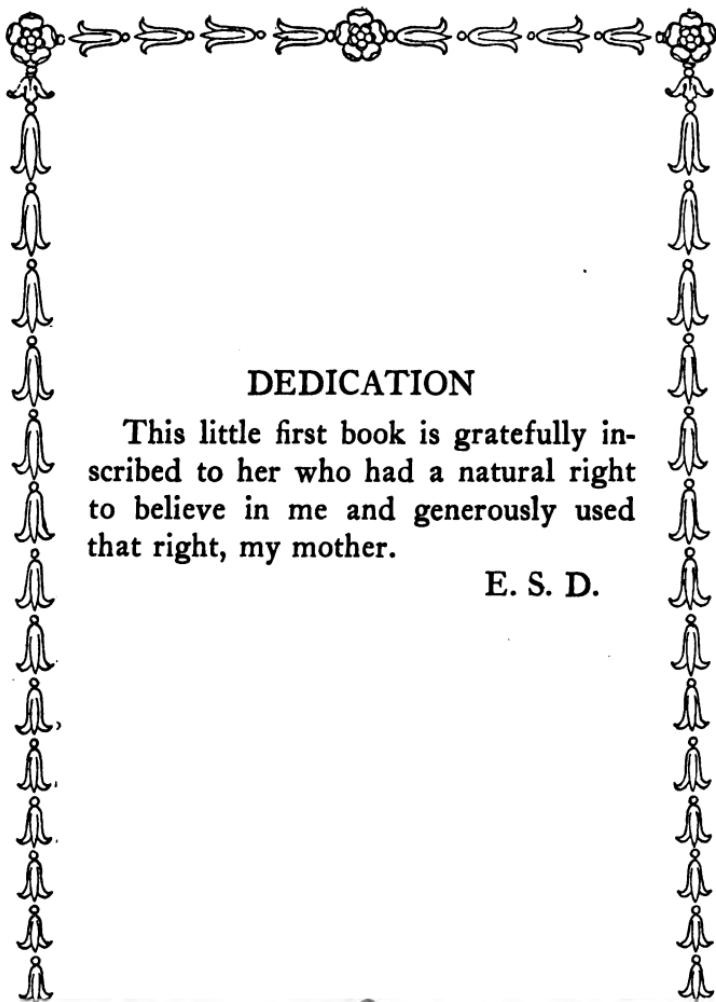
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SEP 18 1909



DEDICATION

This little first book is gratefully inscribed to her who had a natural right to believe in me and generously used that right, my mother.

E. S. D.



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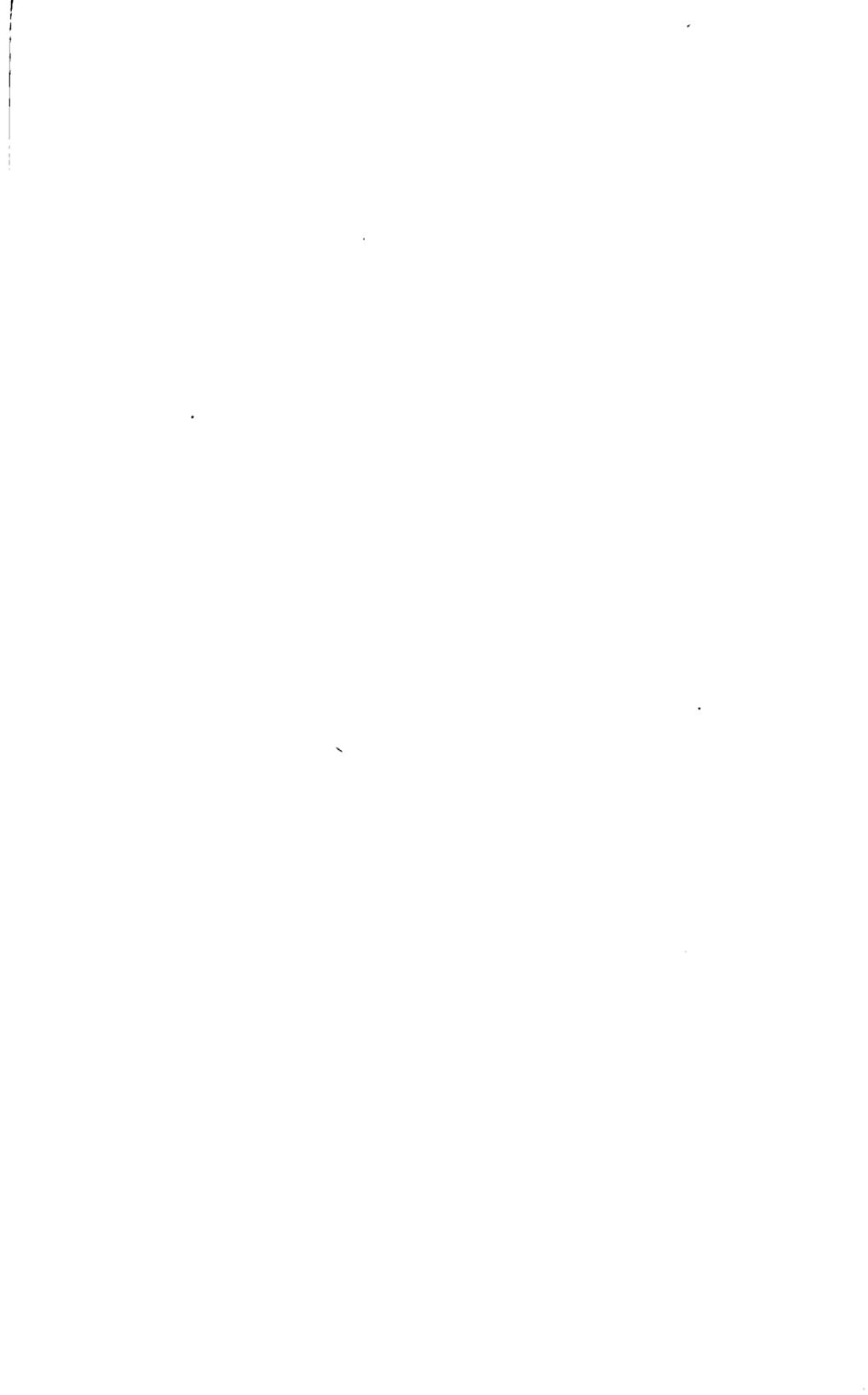
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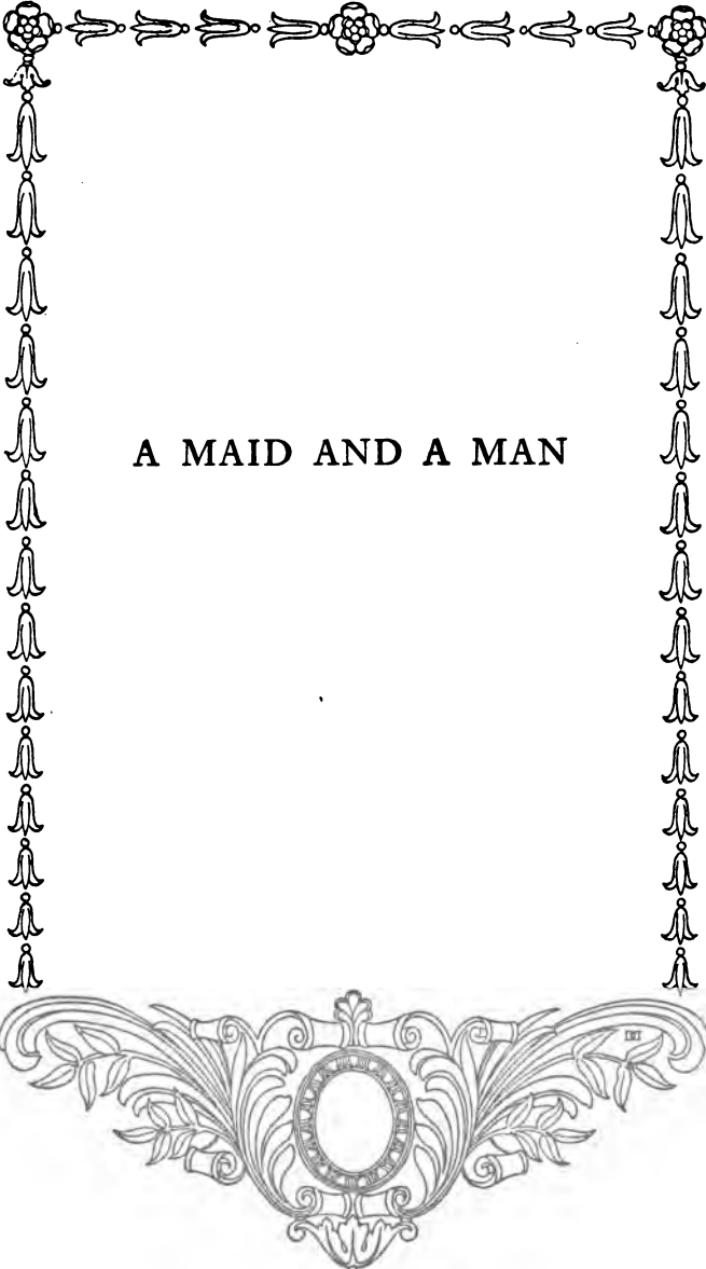
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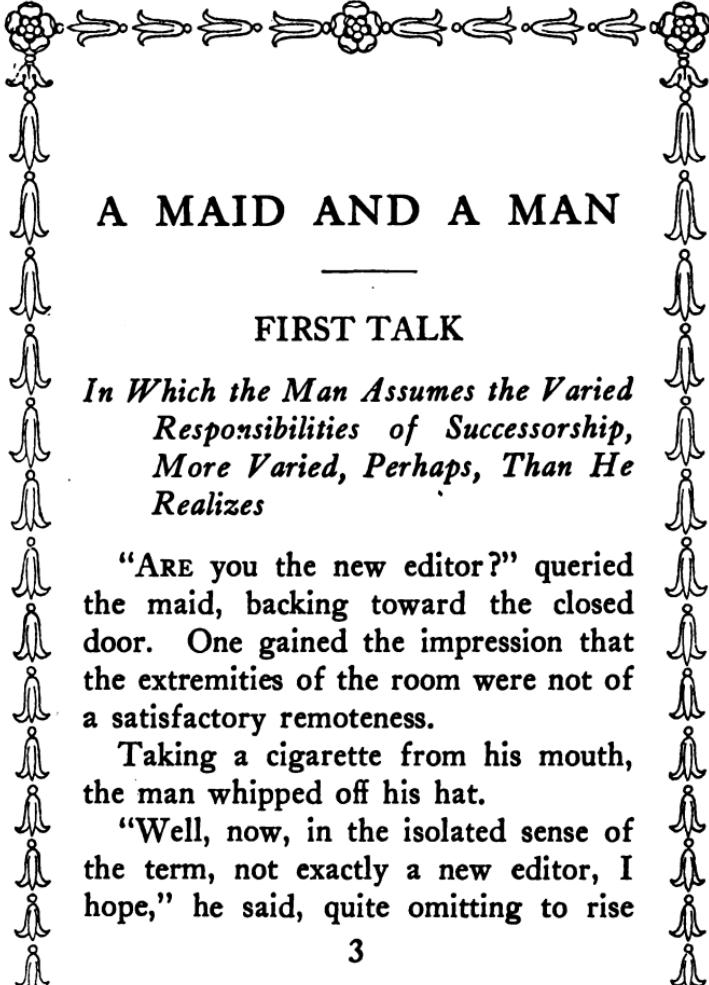






A MAID AND A MAN





A MAID AND A MAN

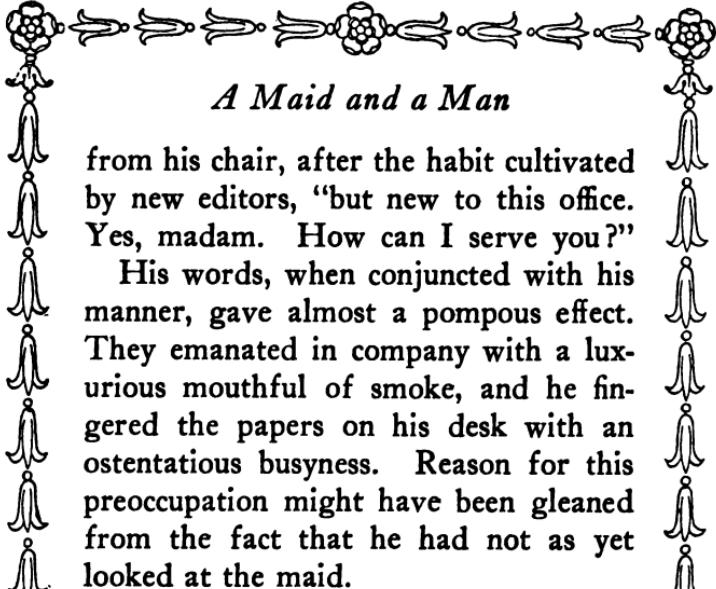
FIRST TALK

In Which the Man Assumes the Varied Responsibilities of Successorship, More Varied, Perhaps, Than He Realizes

"ARE you the new editor?" queried the maid, backing toward the closed door. One gained the impression that the extremities of the room were not of a satisfactory remoteness.

Taking a cigarette from his mouth, the man whipped off his hat.

"Well, now, in the isolated sense of the term, not exactly a new editor, I hope," he said, quite omitting to rise

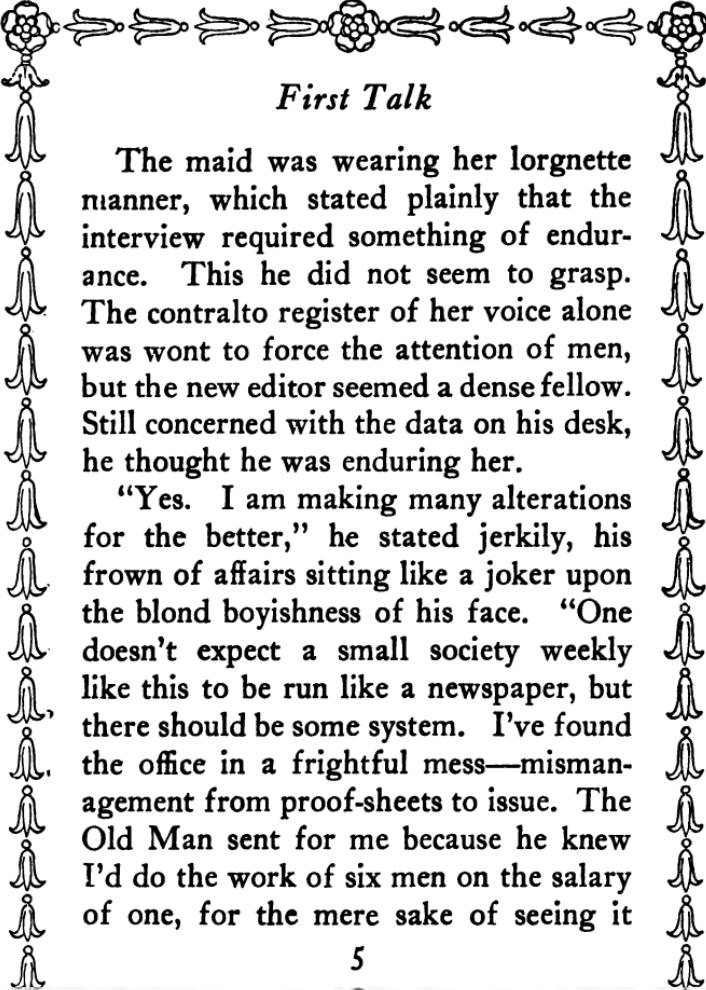


A Maid and a Man

from his chair, after the habit cultivated by new editors, "but new to this office. Yes, madam. How can I serve you?"

His words, when conjuncted with his manner, gave almost a pompous effect. They emanated in company with a luxurious mouthful of smoke, and he fingered the papers on his desk with an ostentatious busyness. Reason for this preoccupation might have been gleaned from the fact that he had not as yet looked at the maid.

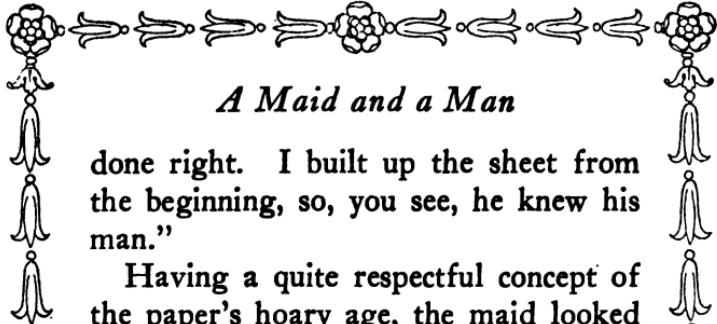
"I have been reviewing the books," said the maid. "Mr. Banks and I were getting on nicely, and it surprised me considerably to read a note from him this morning with the news of his retirement. He said the new editor thought he could improve the reviews and wished to undertake them himself. I only want to understand."



First Talk

The maid was wearing her lorgnette manner, which stated plainly that the interview required something of endurance. This he did not seem to grasp. The contralto register of her voice alone was wont to force the attention of men, but the new editor seemed a dense fellow. Still concerned with the data on his desk, he thought he was enduring her.

"Yes. I am making many alterations for the better," he stated jerkily, his frown of affairs sitting like a joker upon the blond boyishness of his face. "One doesn't expect a small society weekly like this to be run like a newspaper, but there should be some system. I've found the office in a frightful mess—mismanagement from proof-sheets to issue. The Old Man sent for me because he knew I'd do the work of six men on the salary of one, for the mere sake of seeing it



A Maid and a Man

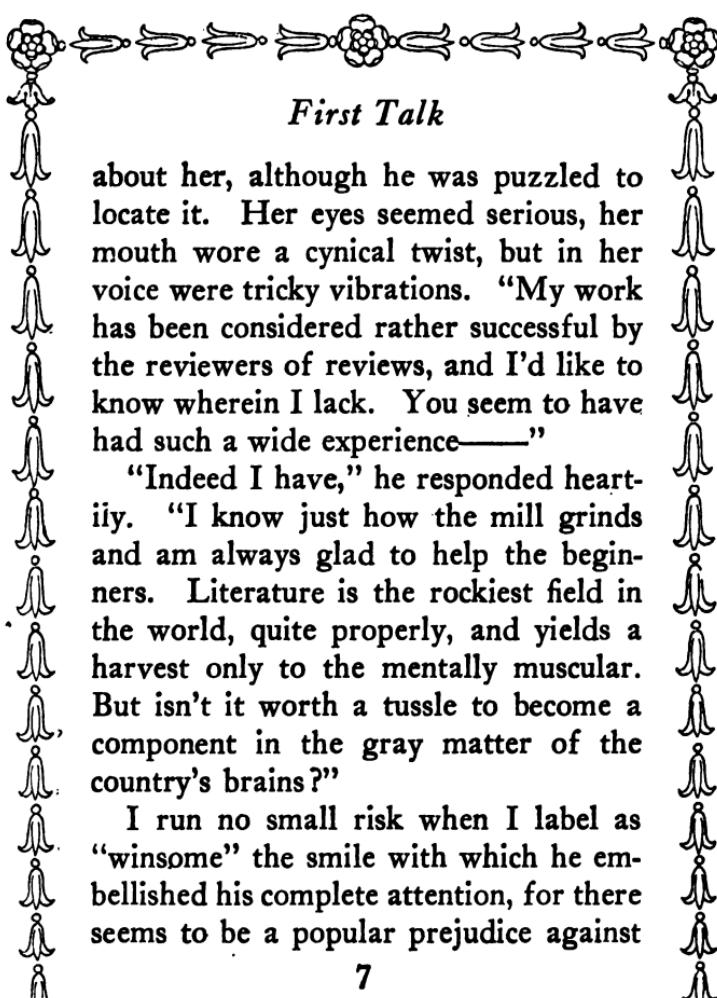
done right. I built up the sheet from the beginning, so, you see, he knew his man."

Having a quite respectful concept of the paper's hoary age, the maid looked this youth over with skepticism.

"You?" was all she said, but the monosyllable was unquestionably a call for defense. Instantly the man laid down his papers and looked at her.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he then said, as though she had only that moment entered the room. He slipped his arms hastily into his coat, for until now he had sat unperturbed in his blue cambric shirt. "Does the smoke annoy you, Miss—ah— Won't you be seated? I'd like to talk the matter over with you."

"Thank you," said the maid sedately. He knew there was a smile somewhere



First Talk

about her, although he was puzzled to locate it. Her eyes seemed serious, her mouth wore a cynical twist, but in her voice were tricky vibrations. "My work has been considered rather successful by the reviewers of reviews, and I'd like to know wherein I lack. You seem to have had such a wide experience——"

"Indeed I have," he responded heartily. "I know just how the mill grinds and am always glad to help the beginners. Literature is the rockiest field in the world, quite properly, and yields a harvest only to the mentally muscular. But isn't it worth a tussle to become a component in the gray matter of the country's brains?"

I run no small risk when I label as "winsome" the smile with which he embellished his complete attention, for there seems to be a popular prejudice against



A Maid and a Man

applying such adjectives to a man. His hair grew extremely high upon his forehead, or, more accurately, did not grow for an extreme height. His eyebrows were sparse and blond, which gave him the surprised look of a boy.

It seemed passing strange that the notes on his desk should so suddenly have dropped below par value and only because he had looked at the maid; but, of course, all values are judged relatively.

The maid was secretly pondering about the possibilities of his age. Although they say a woman is as old as she looks and a man as old as he feels, this cherub-faced child must have been an important exception to both rules.

"I have made no complaint about your work," he was saying. "Indeed, some of it is very able. Your choice of words shows an exquisite nicety, although, com-





First Talk

prehensively speaking, it all needs trimming. No one on my force could do it so well, however, and you can plainly see that, as I myself have almost the entire paper to either compose or rewrite, I cannot possibly do justice to the books. My work is stupendous—stupendous! To be perfectly frank with you, Miss—Miss—a—ah, it is a question of finances that forces the change. In my general upheaval of methods and means," he continued, blinking at her through the smoke clouds swirling lazily in the air, "I shall endeavor to create a specified reviewer's salary, in which event I shall be glad to give you the work. If you will leave your address I shall inform you of any success I may have. Thank you," he drawled, over a perusal of the card she had handed him. "Just a moment, Miss—ah—Lusk. Are you ambi-



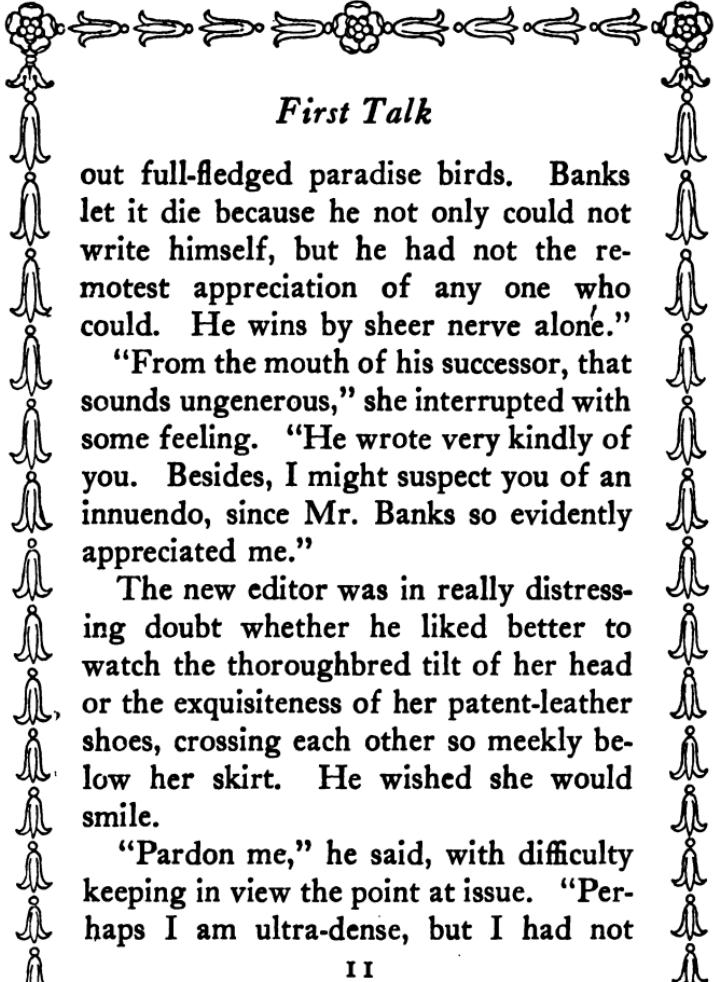
A Maid and a Man

tious to attempt the better class of work, in the short story or poetry line, you know? Your style suggests possibilities to me. I fancy you have temperament."

At this, the maid evidenced her first unbending. Although she did not exactly smile at him, she gave the impression that inwardly she was responding to his beams.

"I am atrociously ambitious," she said with some deprecation, halting midway to the door. "My chief interest, of course, lies in that sort of thing."

"Mine, too!" he cried, with an off-hand eagerness. "Won't you spare me a moment more? Sit down, please. Thank you. Do you mind my smoking? I'm so much happier. In addition to editing the issue every week, I aim to resurrect the short story syndicate and make it an incubator from which to turn



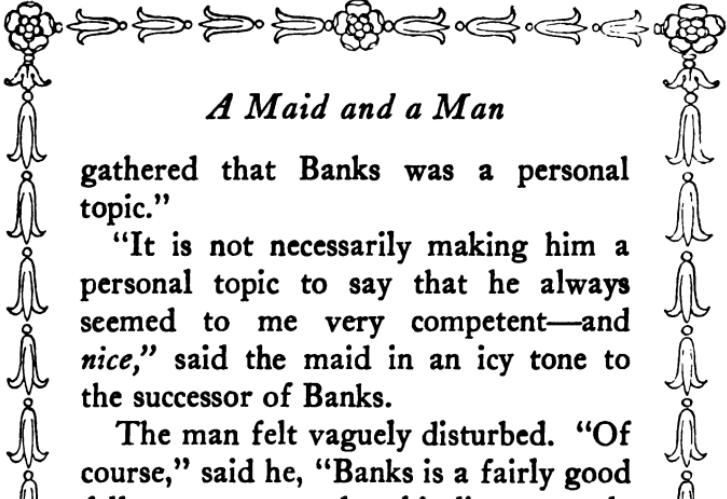
First Talk

out full-fledged paradise birds. Banks let it die because he not only could not write himself, but he had not the remotest appreciation of any one who could. He wins by sheer nerve alone."

"From the mouth of his successor, that sounds ungenerous," she interrupted with some feeling. "He wrote very kindly of you. Besides, I might suspect you of an innuendo, since Mr. Banks so evidently appreciated me."

The new editor was in really distressing doubt whether he liked better to watch the thoroughbred tilt of her head or the exquisiteness of her patent-leather shoes, crossing each other so meekly below her skirt. He wished she would smile.

"Pardon me," he said, with difficulty keeping in view the point at issue. "Perhaps I am ultra-dense, but I had not



A Maid and a Man

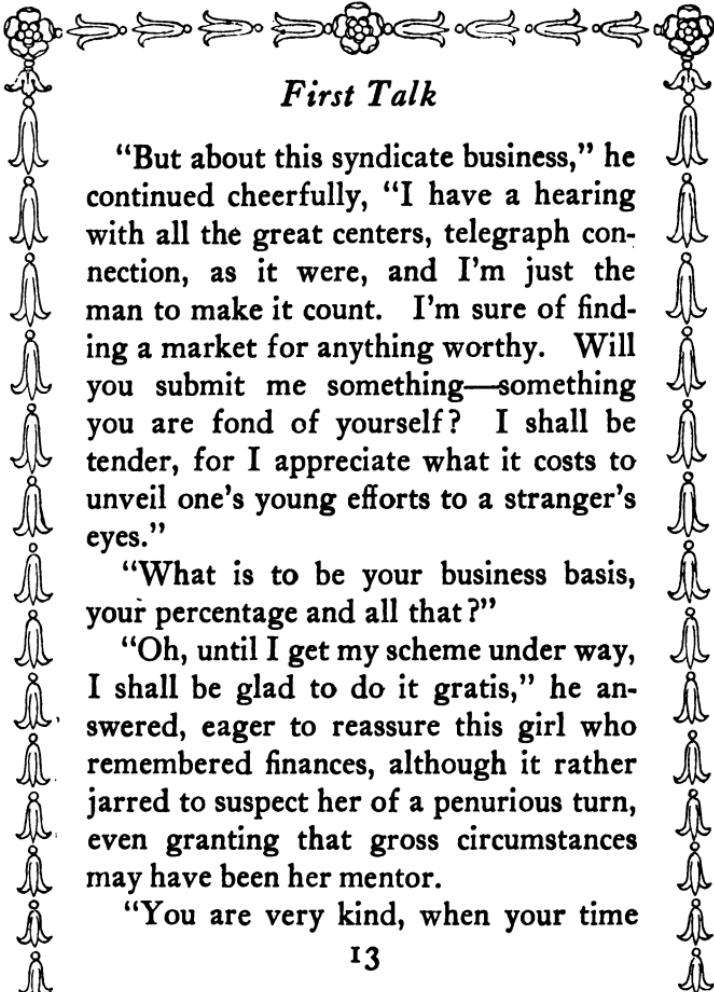
gathered that Banks was a personal topic."

"It is not necessarily making him a personal topic to say that he always seemed to me very competent—and nice," said the maid in an icy tone to the successor of Banks.

The man felt vaguely disturbed. "Of course," said he, "Banks is a fairly good fellow as a man, but his literary style is generally either ragged or bombastic."

"He may not be as subtle as some, but he has a manly mind," said the maid, and with such decision that the reign of Mr. Banks as a topic was ended.

The man marveled for a moment at the decided flush upon her face, but on the whole was glad to dismiss the subject, as the entrance of his predecessor into their discussion seemed somehow to have shattered their peace.



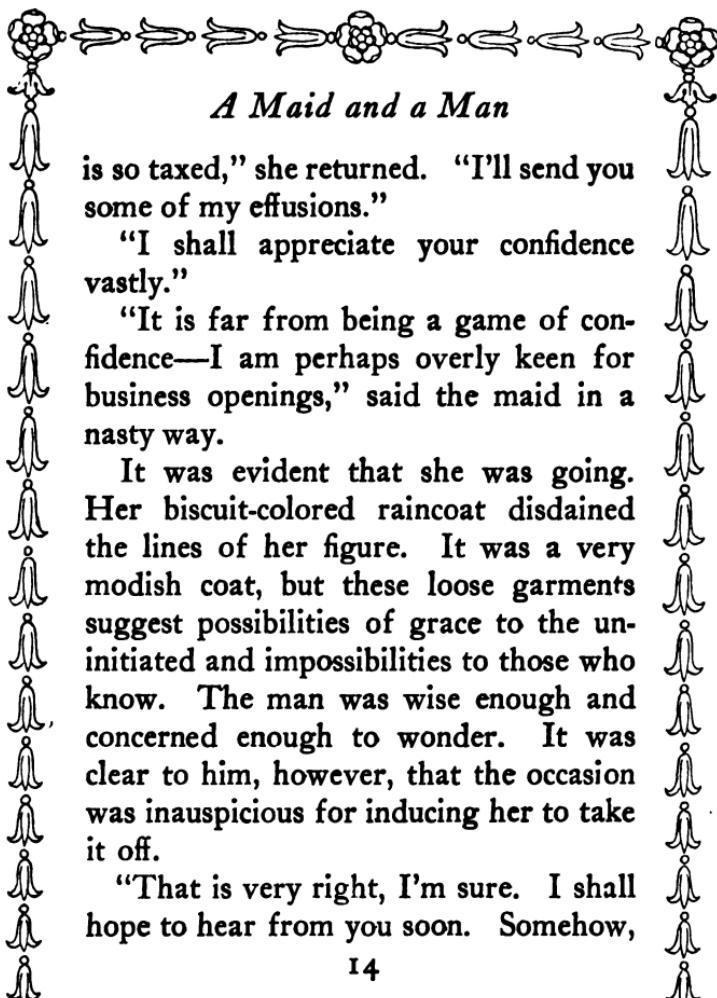
First Talk

"But about this syndicate business," he continued cheerfully, "I have a hearing with all the great centers, telegraph connection, as it were, and I'm just the man to make it count. I'm sure of finding a market for anything worthy. Will you submit me something—something you are fond of yourself? I shall be tender, for I appreciate what it costs to unveil one's young efforts to a stranger's eyes."

"What is to be your business basis, your percentage and all that?"

"Oh, until I get my scheme under way, I shall be glad to do it gratis," he answered, eager to reassure this girl who remembered finances, although it rather jarred to suspect her of a penurious turn, even granting that gross circumstances may have been her mentor.

"You are very kind, when your time



A Maid and a Man

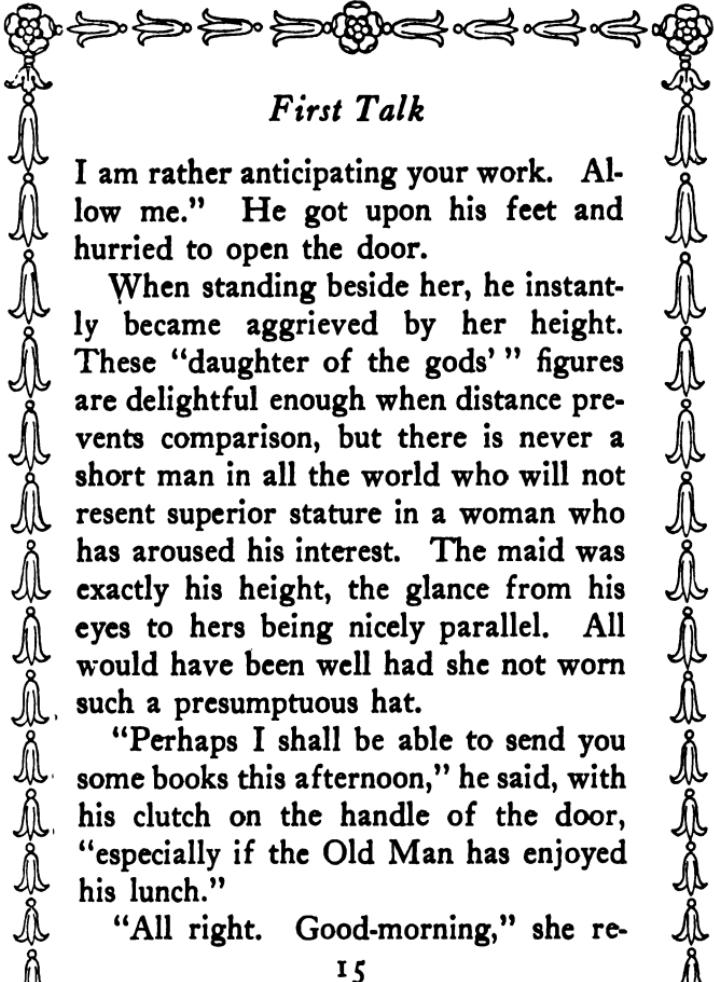
is so taxed," she returned. "I'll send you some of my effusions."

"I shall appreciate your confidence vastly."

"It is far from being a game of confidence—I am perhaps overly keen for business openings," said the maid in a nasty way.

It was evident that she was going. Her biscuit-colored raincoat disdained the lines of her figure. It was a very modish coat, but these loose garments suggest possibilities of grace to the uninitiated and impossibilities to those who know. The man was wise enough and concerned enough to wonder. It was clear to him, however, that the occasion was inauspicious for inducing her to take it off.

"That is very right, I'm sure. I shall hope to hear from you soon. Somehow,



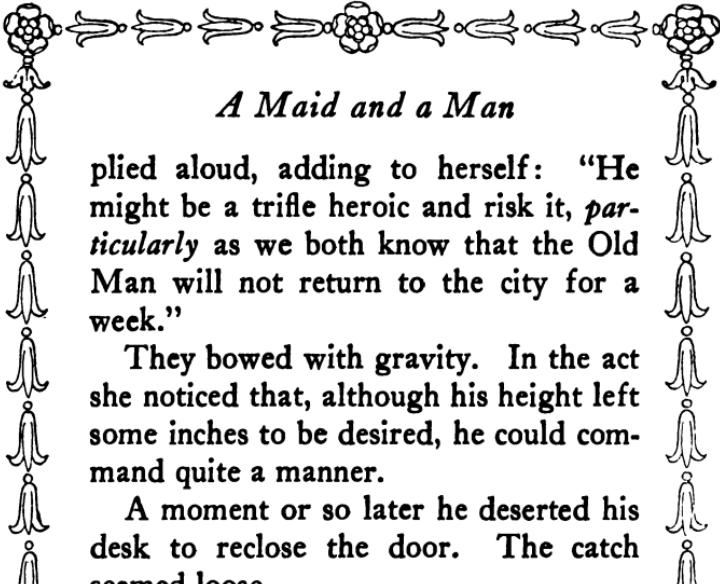
First Talk

I am rather anticipating your work. Allow me." He got upon his feet and hurried to open the door.

When standing beside her, he instantly became aggrieved by her height. These "daughter of the gods'" figures are delightful enough when distance prevents comparison, but there is never a short man in all the world who will not resent superior stature in a woman who has aroused his interest. The maid was exactly his height, the glance from his eyes to hers being nicely parallel. All would have been well had she not worn such a presumptuous hat.

"Perhaps I shall be able to send you some books this afternoon," he said, with his clutch on the handle of the door, "especially if the Old Man has enjoyed his lunch."

"All right. Good-morning," she re-



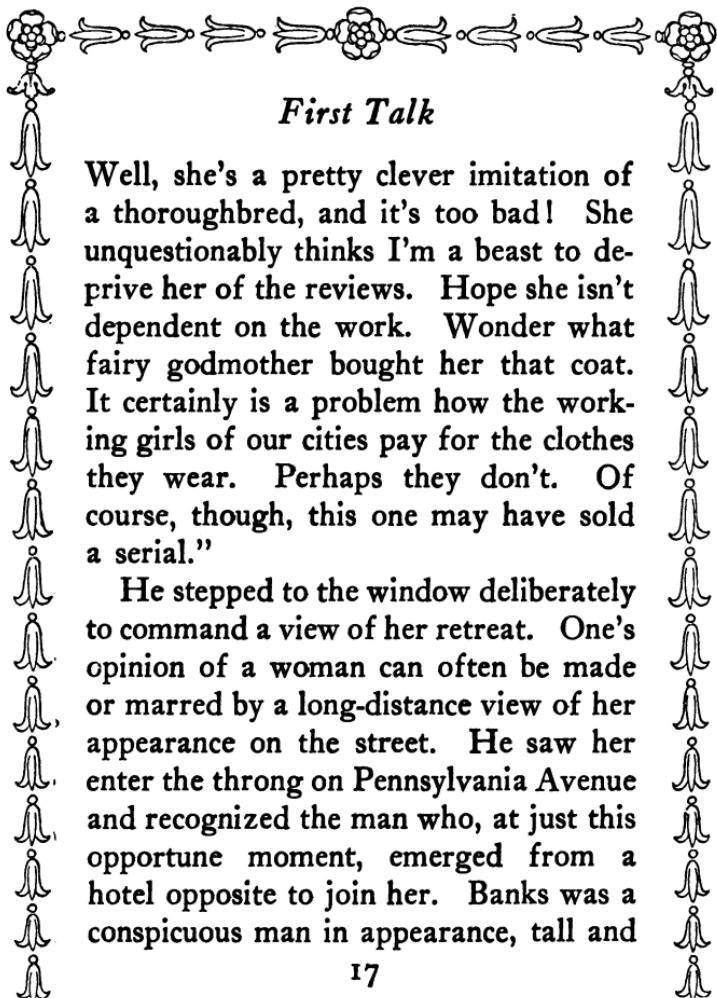
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plied aloud, adding to herself: "He might be a trifle heroic and risk it, *particularly* as we both know that the Old Man will not return to the city for a week."

They bowed with gravity. In the act she noticed that, although his height left some inches to be desired, he could command quite a manner.

A moment or so later he deserted his desk to reclose the door. The catch seemed loose.

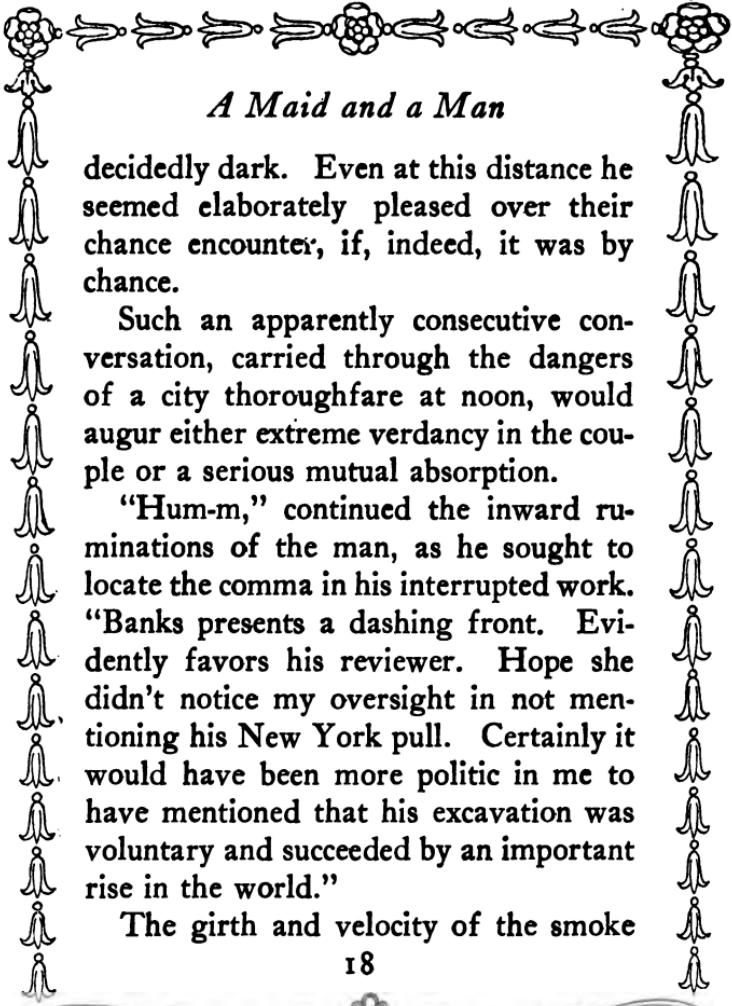
"Contwist it!" he muttered mildly, his small attempt at a rage flunking because he was really in a most amiable humor. "Although I suppose twisting it is what's made it loose. The wornout handles of this door would be a fair cyclometer to gauge the number of fame-aspirants that slink into this office. Now, I wonder what manner of hysteria that girl writes.



First Talk

Well, she's a pretty clever imitation of a thoroughbred, and it's too bad! She unquestionably thinks I'm a beast to deprive her of the reviews. Hope she isn't dependent on the work. Wonder what fairy godmother bought her that coat. It certainly is a problem how the working girls of our cities pay for the clothes they wear. Perhaps they don't. Of course, though, this one may have sold a serial."

He stepped to the window deliberately to command a view of her retreat. One's opinion of a woman can often be made or marred by a long-distance view of her appearance on the street. He saw her enter the throng on Pennsylvania Avenue and recognized the man who, at just this opportune moment, emerged from a hotel opposite to join her. Banks was a conspicuous man in appearance, tall and



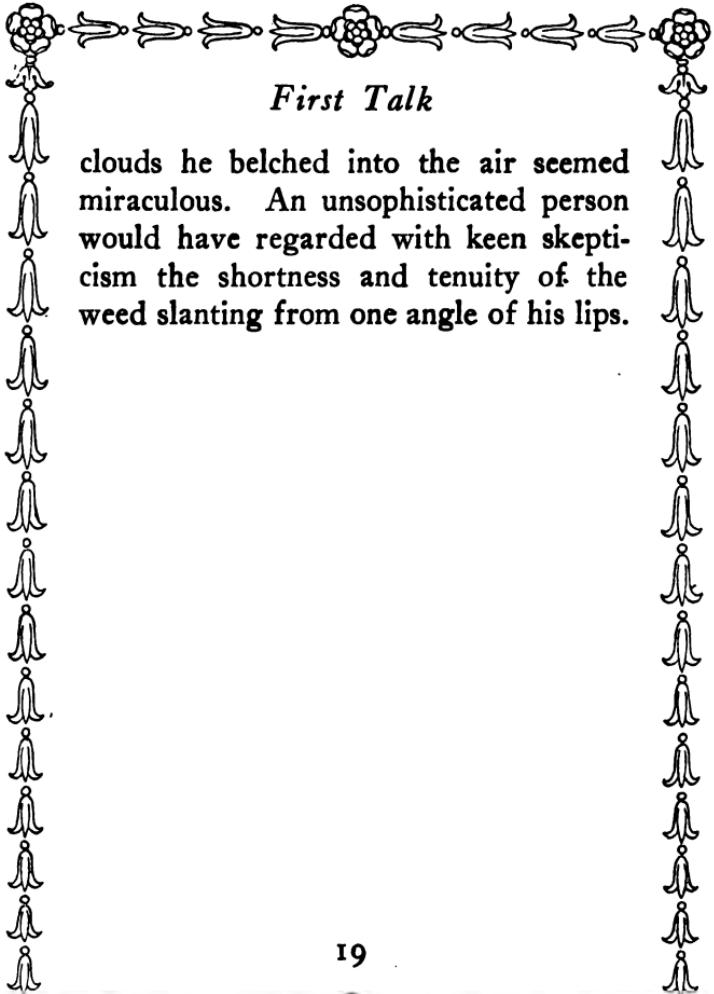
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decidedly dark. Even at this distance he seemed elaborately pleased over their chance encounter, if, indeed, it was by chance.

Such an apparently consecutive conversation, carried through the dangers of a city thoroughfare at noon, would augur either extreme verdancy in the couple or a serious mutual absorption.

"Hum-m," continued the inward ruminations of the man, as he sought to locate the comma in his interrupted work. "Banks presents a dashing front. Evidently favors his reviewer. Hope she didn't notice my oversight in not mentioning his New York pull. Certainly it would have been more politic in me to have mentioned that his excavation was voluntary and succeeded by an important rise in the world."

The girth and velocity of the smoke



First Talk

clouds he belched into the air seemed miraculous. An unsophisticated person would have regarded with keen skepticism the shortness and tenuity of the weed slanting from one angle of his lips.



SECOND TALK

*Concerning the Irresponsibility of a
Man in Contracting THE Woman;
and Vice Versa.*

THE man was chafing his hands before a gay fire in the grate.

After a spirited skirmish of notes, with the submitted manuscript of the maid as cause and excuse, he had won the privilege of an evening call. In the short wait that followed his entrance, he had had ample time to wonder over the luxurious appointments of her home.

Mentally, he was sorting words in the effort to construct a unique sentence about how, in this age of conservatory



Second Talk

heating, the efficacy of an open fire is not so much to warm us bodily, as to take the chill from our imaginations and our souls.

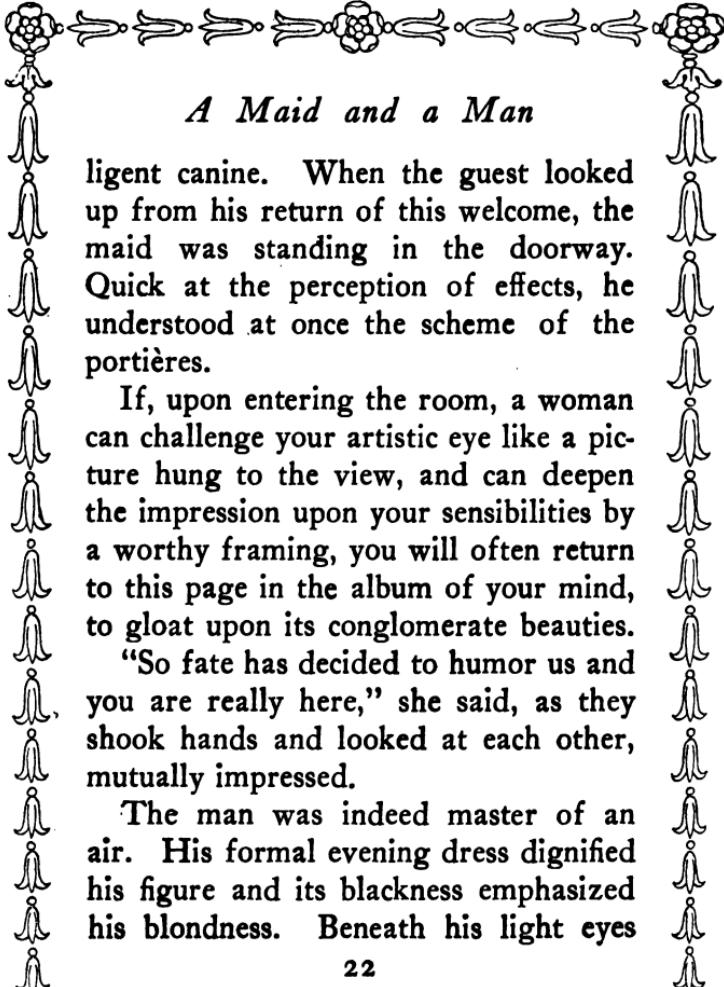
He heard a faint sound, like the lapping of a distant river, accompanied by a uniform tapping.

"Affects silk and French heels," he informed himself, rising.

The taps were multiplied to about the number of steps in an ordinary flight of stairs. His eyes hovered expectantly about the opening of the portières.

Suddenly a dog, petite, black and wriggling with welcome, rushed into the room like a miniature cyclone. He danced upon two legs about the stranger, waving his paws and emitting odd little yelps. His beady eyes expressed whole sentences that he could not speak.

Most men are attracted by an intel-



A Maid and a Man

ligent canine. When the guest looked up from his return of this welcome, the maid was standing in the doorway. Quick at the perception of effects, he understood at once the scheme of the portières.

If, upon entering the room, a woman can challenge your artistic eye like a picture hung to the view, and can deepen the impression upon your sensibilities by a worthy framing, you will often return to this page in the album of your mind, to gloat upon its conglomerate beauties.

"So fate has decided to humor us and you are really here," she said, as they shook hands and looked at each other, mutually impressed.

The man was indeed master of an air. His formal evening dress dignified his figure and its blackness emphasized his blondness. Beneath his light eyes



Second Talk

was noticeable a puffiness, which might have resulted from night study of books or of people—or from dissipation. She laid the blame, however, upon the pallor of his brows and lashes. He nicely manipulated the deference, comprehension and lordliness of a "woman's man."

The maid wore a dull gold color. Her hair was splendid and built up after a distracting caprice. Her cheeks were quite pink and her forehead, or the section of it visible from beneath the mass of her hair, looked wax white. He concluded that her eyes must be green, as they seemed very calm and cruel.

"I am glad you also feel that fate is concerned with us," he said, as they settled before the fire.

"Please don't expect me to really believe it. I could not be natural if conscious of such a distinguished presence."



A Maid and a Man

"You should have the histrionic faculty of being absorbed with the art of your conversation," he suggested.

"Then you expect our talk to be an artful one?"

"Not in a degree to spoil its sincerity, but doesn't it whip on your vivacity to imagine an appreciative audience? Fate is the one third party who is never *de trop* between a man and a woman, if they are personally interested."

"*If* they are interested," she repeated, widening her eyes.

"Yes," he asserted boldly. "I rather fancy the conceit."

"And I do not," she said decisively. "Fate is large and must be frightfully clumsy. The chairs are too spindly if he should get tired cavorting, and he'd break the china. We might have an awkward time dodging him if he once



Second Talk

should get well on the move. I am not much of an athlete."

"Well, I am, when it comes to dodging a rampant fate," asserted the man.

The boast impressed her oddly, and she bent over the dog long enough to write it on her memory.

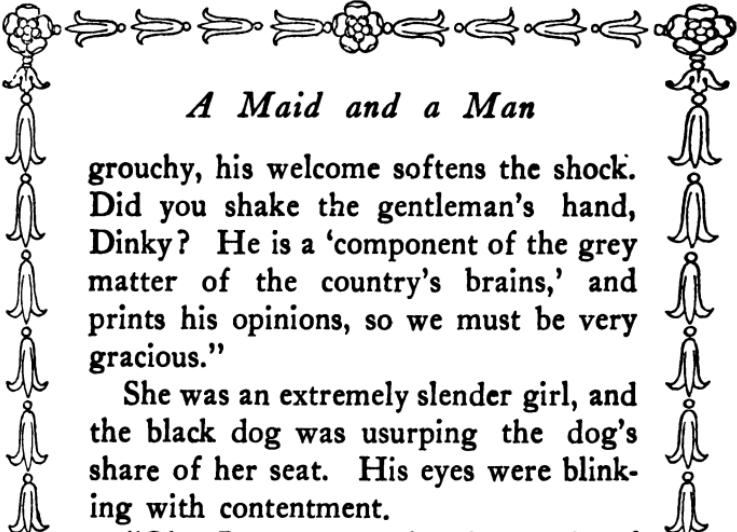
"Aren't you satisfied with just us?" she asked, to break the pause. "My Dinky Dog here chaperons with irreproachable delicacy."

"But why need any one? Are we not in America?" he objected.

"So much so that we can dispense with the chaperonage of even fate."

"Fate is most diversifying when times get dull. Why do you prefer the dog?"

"I send him in ahead to give the first greeting—he never disappoints. If I am amiable, Dinky prepares the way for any warmth in my manner, and if I am



A Maid and a Man

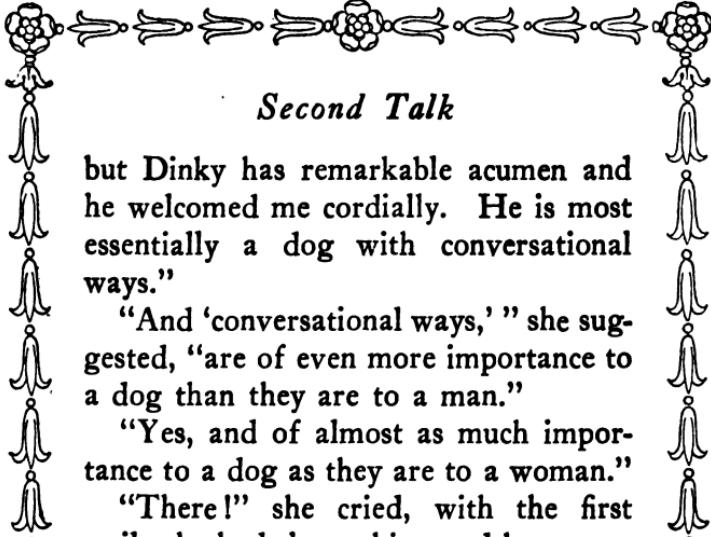
grouchy, his welcome softens the shock. Did you shake the gentleman's hand, Dinky? He is a 'component of the grey matter of the country's brains,' and prints his opinions, so we must be very gracious."

She was an extremely slender girl, and the black dog was usurping the dog's share of her seat. His eyes were blinking with contentment.

"Oh, I say now, that is caustic of you," protested the man, with the earnestness of a boy pleading for a whim. "Dinky welcomed me and became my friend because I am a man."

"It seems we never can uproot that time-grown notion, so essentially masculine, that we women must welcome you simply because you are men. What century is this, anyway?"

"I don't wish to appear vainglorious,



Second Talk

but Dinky has remarkable acumen and he welcomed me cordially. He is most essentially a dog with conversational ways."

"And 'conversational ways,' " she suggested, "are of even more importance to a dog than they are to a man."

"Yes, and of almost as much importance to a dog as they are to a woman."

"There!" she cried, with the first smile she had shown him, and he was so charmed with the sudden illumination that he did not at all mind the point she was scoring. "That is my former complaint in brief. From the masculine view, it is not so much to be merely a dog or merely a woman as it is to be merely a man—we must be dogs or women, plus."

"Well, perhaps that is the way we regard women in general," he said, bent



A Maid and a Man

thoughtfully toward the fire. "In **ratio** with our market value as **somedodies or nobodies**, we require that they possess so much of beauty, wit or charm. We try for a good bargain."

"And so, Dinky Dog," she admonished, "we should accept our valuation as mere chattels with becoming meekness." She scratched the lopping ear of the beast in a companionable way.

"But it is quite different, of course, when it comes to a case of *the woman*," continued the man, looking straight into her eyes. "One cannot stop to haggle then. No price is too absurd, excepting perhaps one's honor."

"Or one's vanity."

"Yes, or one's vanity. I should think it much nicer to be *the woman*."

"It has its advantages, but if the purchaser be at all a man, he insists upon



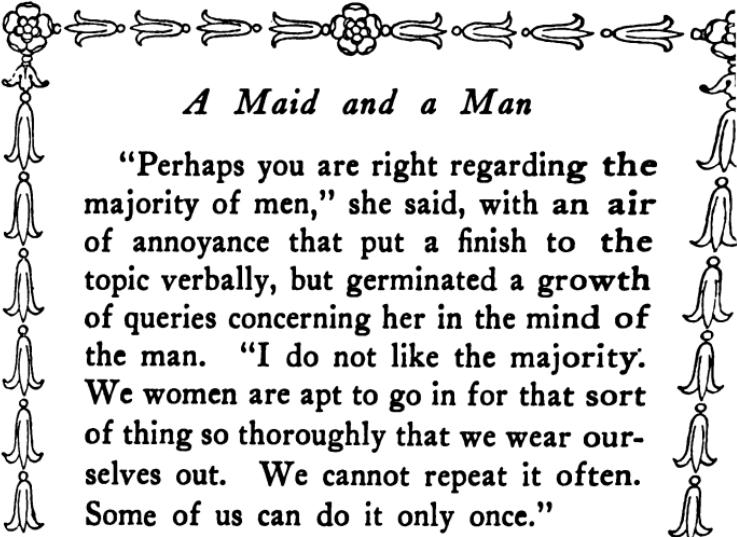
Second Talk

being *the* man. That, you know, limits the woman's sphere."

"If she isn't satisfied with the soul of one man, she can divide her life into periods and, if she is clever, be *the* woman at different times to several. She would need to cultivate a nicety of taste about the intervals between periods —that is the key to the situation. Precipitation ruins her dignity. On the man's side, granting that he is a gentleman, practice in such affairs becomes a virtue."

"Yes, sir, it can be done that way, but the only excuse for the entire system is erased—irrevocableness. It is straight-way made a farce, like the satire on the 'only women' of Bonaparte."

"But Bonaparte was a sincere creature and master of self-hypnotism; he believed in it every time."



A Maid and a Man

"Perhaps you are right regarding the majority of men," she said, with an air of annoyance that put a finish to the topic verbally, but germinated a growth of queries concerning her in the mind of the man. "I do not like the majority. We women are apt to go in for that sort of thing so thoroughly that we wear ourselves out. We cannot repeat it often. Some of us can do it only once."

There ensued a short silence which gave him time to attribute her with many suppressed emotions she was perhaps not at all feeling. Succeeding silences do more for words than words do for themselves.

"I must ask your pardon for being a trifle late," he said after a space, watching for the effect of the coming name.
"I dined at Mrs. Fritz Melnott's."



Second Talk

Her shoulders came forward a bit, then quickly returned to place.

"I am quite stupid about your social code here in the District, as we've only recently moved in with the new administration. You will need to announce when and where I am to be impressed. I am sorry, but it's my misfortune, not my fault."

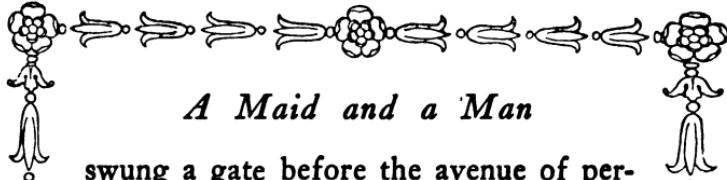
"The mention of the name was not arrogance. I somehow wanted you to know that I dine with nice people."

"You are kind to tutor me, but in a merely business connection, is it of such vital concern with whom one dines?"

"I thought it strange I had never met you. I meet everyone here and you are the sort one would remember."

"Then to save you such a waste of thought, you need merely remember that I am new to the Capitol." Her tone





A Maid and a Man

swung a gate before the avenue of personalities.

The next silence was of sufficient duration to persuade him of her reticence, and, as reticence in a woman spells either stupidity or a past, the question raised is obvious.

It was also long enough for her to stumble upon the Fritz Melnott name in the garret of her mind where was jumbled all her social jargon, and, linking it to the consequent idea of smartness, millions and this man, to suggest that perhaps he was of the elect.

He revived their talk with a question.
"Your room is on the third floor?"

"Third story front," she assented, wonderingly.

"You wear French heels?"

She extended her tilted slipper towards the fire. Comparing the color



Second Talk

of the silk-clad instep and the kid with the yellow rose in her hair, he noted with satisfaction that they precisely matched.

"Your halls are carpeted, but the hardwood of your stairways is bare."

"I salute you, Sherlock," she cried. "Dinky, awaken—we are entertaining a wizard unaware."

"No, I am only an interested man. It is as bad form to introduce too early personalities as to discuss the menu at a dinner, but really, your appearance has surprised me amazingly to-night. It must have been a frightful descent to come down those two flights to my level."

"But while my feet were coming down, you see, my spirits were rising."

"I hope they have not all escaped; that would make it hard for both of us."

"No, that is the most obliging faculty





A Maid and a Man

of one's spirits. They can soar to infinite heights and yet make us sparkle here below."

"I suppose," he suggested, "there is an unseen wire connecting you with the main battery above."

She pondered for a moment over the multi-colored signal flags of irony, but concluded to give it up.

"You say I surprise you to-night. That is something of a triumph, no matter what the cause, but why?"

"You look ten years younger than at the office. It is some trick of the hair or your evening color. I'm generally apt at such ruses, but I cannot be sure."

"Or such rouges, perhaps you would prefer to say. It is easy enough to a woman—a coat of powder, a smudge of the rosy red, a pencil applied sparingly



Second Talk

about the eyes. There are many tricks of the beauty trade."

"No. You are not so foolish as that," he asserted with decision. "Besides, I am too wise to be hoodwinked. It is simply your evening veneer; some women have the habit of scintillating in gas-light."

She laughed suddenly with contralto enjoyment and he tried to make the laugh unanimous, although he did not know why. She did, however. She was laughing over his assurance that he knew what he did not know.

"You have introduced a trying topic," she said at length, "but I have a sardonic fancy for developing it. One associates the question with horse-hair sofas and twisted handkerchiefs, but how old, now, should you judge me to be?





A Maid and a Man

Remember the premium I place upon a candid opinion."

"Coming from most women, and in this connection, that would call for a candid one."

"Don't you think I am frank?"

"It seems to be an important one of your charms."

"Well?"

"Are you really going to submit me to this harrowing test, first putting me on honor to be truthful?"

"Be brave, be brave," she insisted.

"So be it, lady. I shall use virtue as my prop. Why, I should judge you to be in about the twenty-fourth round."

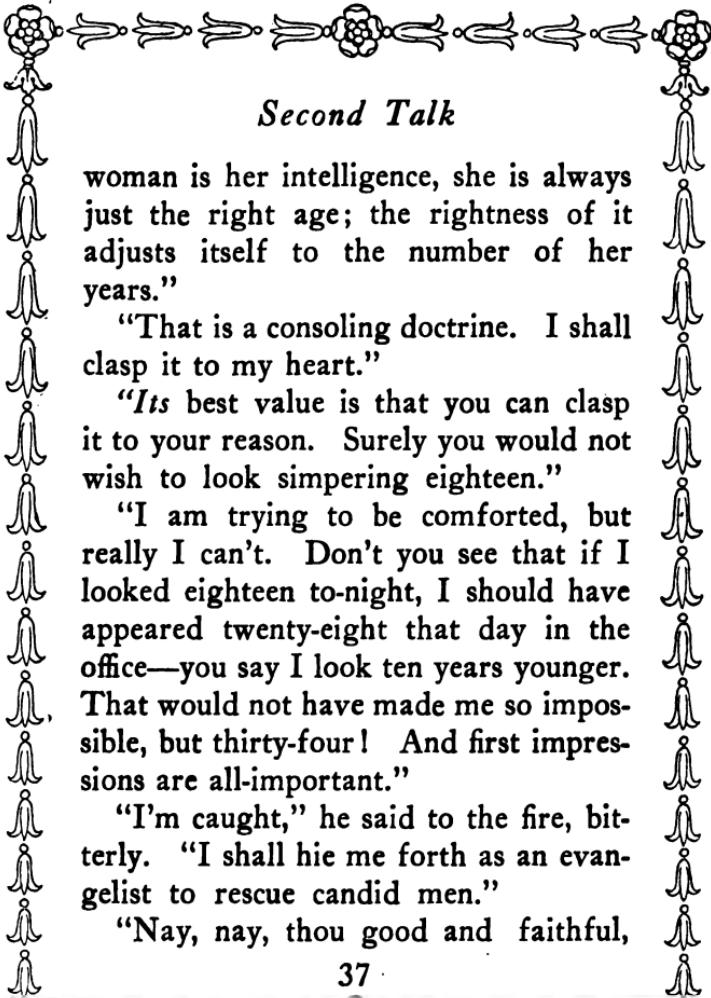
"To-night?"

"To-night," he repeated firmly.

"You are very ungallant."

"Pardon me, not at all ungallant.

When the chief charm of a beautiful



Second Talk

woman is her intelligence, she is always just the right age; the rightness of it adjusts itself to the number of her years."

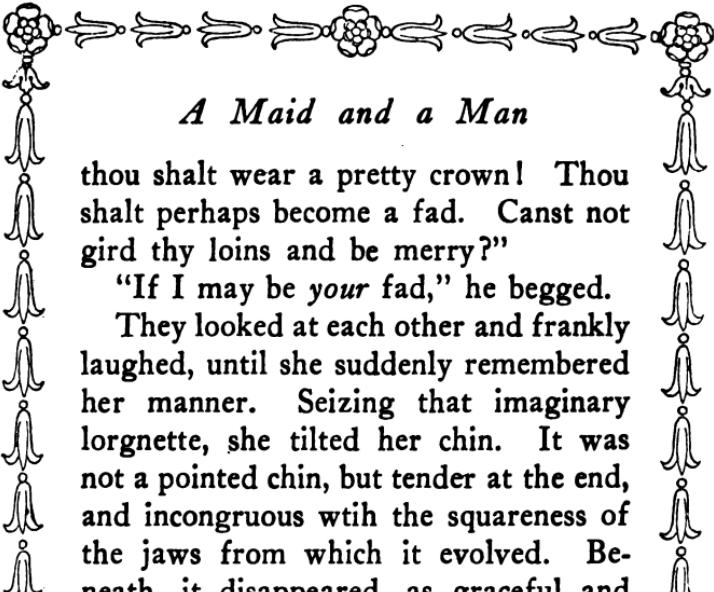
"That is a consoling doctrine. I shall clasp it to my heart."

"*Its* best value is that you can clasp it to your reason. Surely you would not wish to look simpering eighteen."

"I am trying to be comforted, but really I can't. Don't you see that if I looked eighteen to-night, I should have appeared twenty-eight that day in the office—you say I look ten years younger. That would not have made me so impossible, but thirty-four! And first impressions are all-important."

"I'm caught," he said to the fire, bitterly. "I shall hie me forth as an evangelist to rescue candid men."

"Nay, nay, thou good and faithful,



A Maid and a Man

thou shalt wear a pretty crown! Thou shalt perhaps become a fad. Canst not gird thy loins and be merry?"

"If I may be *your* fad," he begged.

They looked at each other and frankly laughed, until she suddenly remembered her manner. Seizing that imaginary lorgnette, she tilted her chin. It was not a pointed chin, but tender at the end, and incongruous with the squareness of the jaws from which it evolved. Beneath, it disappeared, as graceful and white as a heron's breast, into the beauties of her throat.

"And what about the manuscript, my *enfant terrible*?" she said. "I consider him very good to have waited so long."

"You want him to be the centre of attention in the parlor as well as the nursery. That is like most young mothers. When you get to keeping a whole orphan

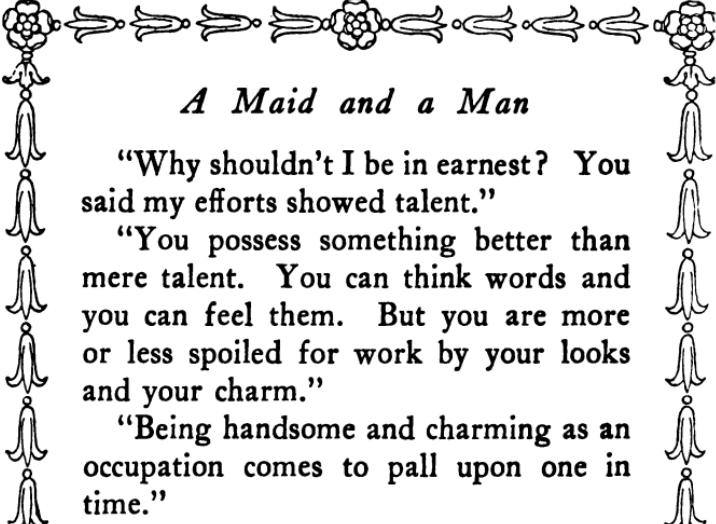


Second Talk

asylum, as I do, you will want them all to stay in their proper quarters."

"But I thought this was a consultation solely for the study of his condition," she said, jealous for the importance of her brain bubble.

"Forgive me if I have been inclined to forget more serious interests," he said. "You see, I was rather unprepared, Miss Lusk, for the room and your appearance. I was expecting to be of aid to a struggling little book reviewer girl, and I find a butler at your door and you, gowned as you deserve to be, in a room quite worthy to be yours. It is very like you, the room, cheerful, costly, with the Dresden china and all. A fellow cannot help wondering whether you are serious when you talk of work. I don't like to waste good energy on a farce."



A Maid and a Man

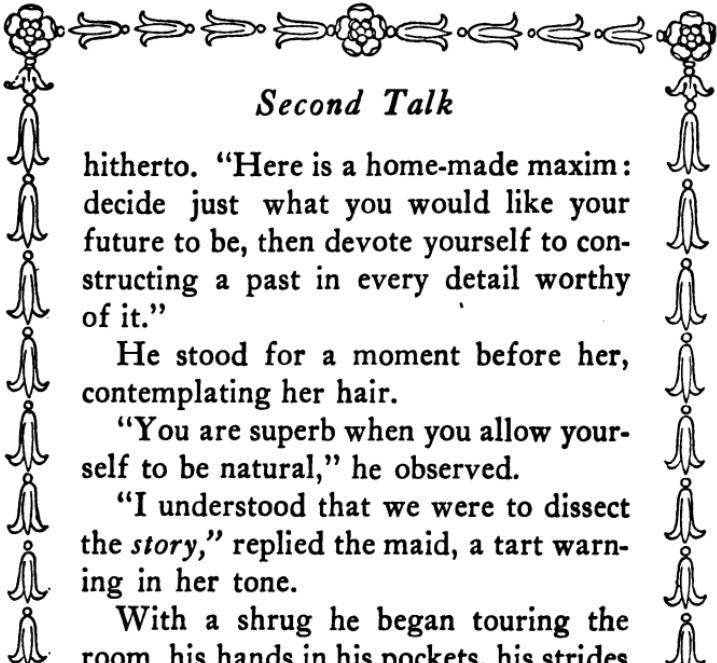
"Why shouldn't I be in earnest? You said my efforts showed talent."

"You possess something better than mere talent. You can think words and you can feel them. But you are more or less spoiled for work by your looks and your charm."

"Being handsome and charming as an occupation comes to pall upon one in time."

"And you hope to construct a future from the force of ennui? It takes something fresher than that, lady. You need to be backed by all the youth, courage and confidence of ambition. There are very few women who ever make futures —they are better on having pasts."

"But the only thing any of us can do is to prepare a past for our future," cried the maid brightly, liking the man better than she had at any moment



Second Talk

hitherto. "Here is a home-made maxim: decide just what you would like your future to be, then devote yourself to constructing a past in every detail worthy of it."

He stood for a moment before her, contemplating her hair.

"You are superb when you allow yourself to be natural," he observed.

"I understood that we were to dissect the *story*," replied the maid, a tart warning in her tone.

With a shrug he began touring the room, his hands in his pockets, his strides long and panther-like.

"So be it, lady. Do you mind my restlessness? I am a creature of nerves, you know, and when I can neither move nor smoke, my thinker seems to stop. Thank you. Now, if we are to work together seriously, we shall need to cut out



A Maid and a Man

this word-play. Fencing with a woman has its allurements, but, after all, is merely recreation."

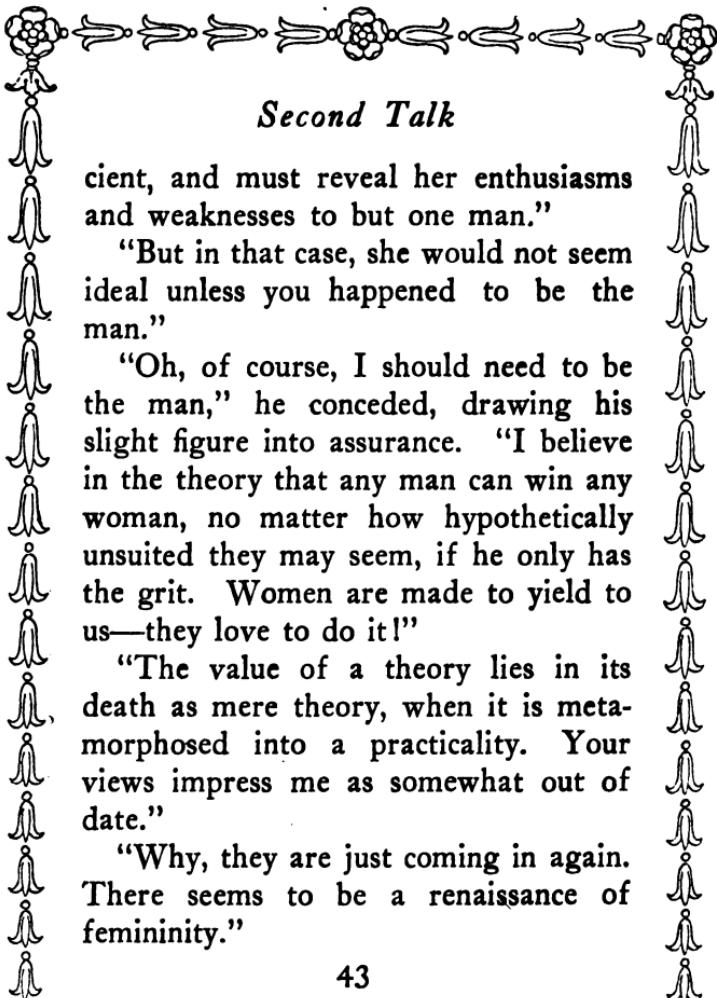
"It is not normal for me to be keen," said the maid, tentatively. "My wrist is soon tired."

She was leaning luxuriously in the fire-glow, a hand clasped about the knob of her chair-back. Her handkerchief was tucked up the wrist of her sleeve and he wondered whether the sense of flowers in the air had its source there.

He was observing her with a mature air of understanding and nearness, that sat like a usurper upon his blondness. Blond men always look like boys. His smile was sweet, but the masculinity about him asserted his redemption.

"Do you know," he observed, "my ideal woman must be a cynic to the world, quite unresponsive and self-suffi-





Second Talk

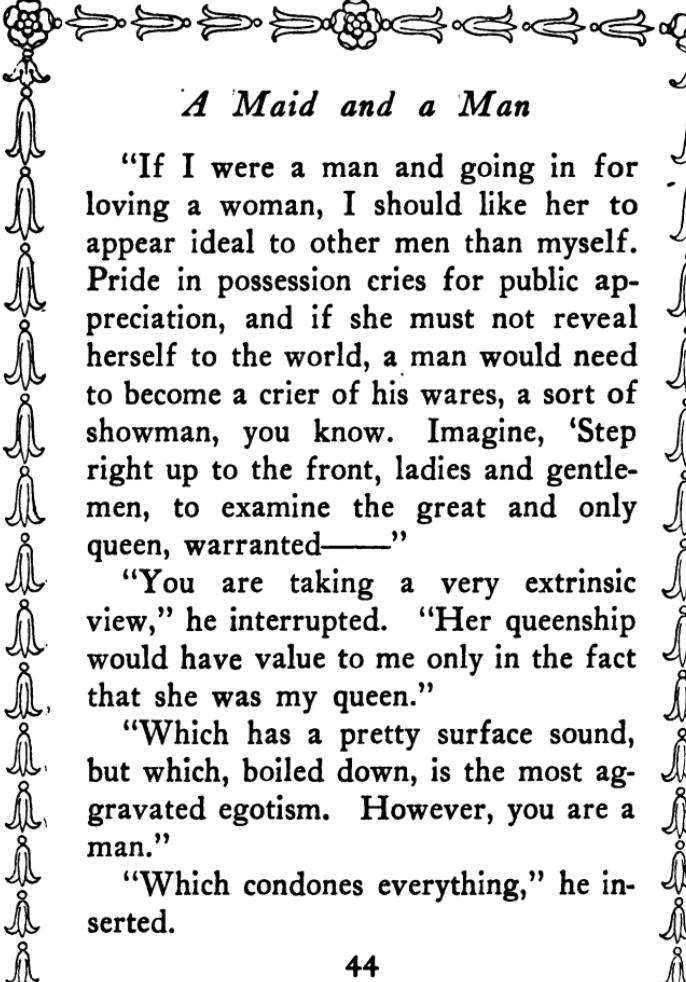
cient, and must reveal her enthusiasms and weaknesses to but one man."

"But in that case, she would not seem ideal unless you happened to be the man."

"Oh, of course, I should need to be the man," he conceded, drawing his slight figure into assurance. "I believe in the theory that any man can win any woman, no matter how hypothetically unsuited they may seem, if he only has the grit. Women are made to yield to us—they love to do it!"

"The value of a theory lies in its death as mere theory, when it is metamorphosed into a practicality. Your views impress me as somewhat out of date."

"Why, they are just coming in again. There seems to be a renaissance of femininity."



A Maid and a Man

"If I were a man and going in for loving a woman, I should like her to appear ideal to other men than myself. Pride in possession cries for public appreciation, and if she must not reveal herself to the world, a man would need to become a crier of his wares, a sort of showman, you know. Imagine, 'Step right up to the front, ladies and gentlemen, to examine the great and only queen, warranted—'"

"You are taking a very extrinsic view," he interrupted. "Her queenship would have value to me only in the fact that she was my queen."

"Which has a pretty surface sound, but which, boiled down, is the most aggravated egotism. However, you are a man."

"Which condones everything," he inserted.



Second Talk

"Which explains everything. But, as we were saying, about my story?" she reminded him, wavering between elation and pique at his willful inversions of their talk. As a woman, she enjoyed the dominance of her personality, but her mind was ruffled at his pertinacious wandering from the topic of her especial thought. She suspected his concern about her story.

"Oh, yes, the story," he said, again on the walk. "We meander, don't we? Now, Miss Lusk, I consider the story good, very good. Your style is apt and your ideas are strong, but your technique is faulty. That is where I hope to help you, although I realize how the erasure of some toothsome word or the clipping of some pet phrase will rouse your soul in rebellion. You beginners seem to gloat over the sins of your darlings. But



A Maid and a Man

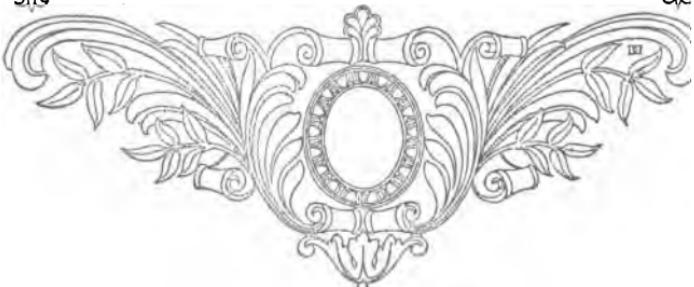
where we do not agree, we can try to arbitrate."

"I will be pliant," said the maid, her vanity coddled by this erudite drift. "In America, they say, even the Almighty must submit His decrees to arbitration."

"Foremostly and of course, you use too many words. Why can't you feel when to stop? You annihilate your best effects by over-development and it makes the story sound young. I want you to find the errors yourself, but let us go over a bit of it together, to show you what I mean."

Drawing a chair beside hers, he placed the manuscript on the joined arms and bent above it, reading aloud and suggesting with a kindness and keenness that roused confidence within her.

"Your local color is true, but blotched too crudely. Background should be un-





Second Talk

ostentatiously blended. See, here are a dozen superfluous adjectives in one paragraph. Adjectives make description too easy. You must humbug the public with some subtler method. Your imagery is often delicious. Listen, 'Night, like a woman masquerading in a bandit's cloak, was stepping at her cue from the wings of the world. She sought to frown with portentous blackness, but so timid and tender a being she was, that the trick of her sex was revealed.' Nothing could be defter. But here, you are too violent; the sun does not 'prance across the sky,' he is quite sedate."

"I protest!" she cried. "The everyday sun they use in Mexico prances as though hitched to a chariot of fire."

"Of course you love your thought—didn't you make it? But you will see in time and I am rather inclined to pro-



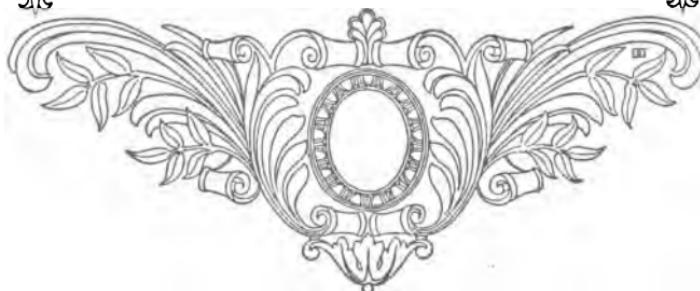
A Maid and a Man

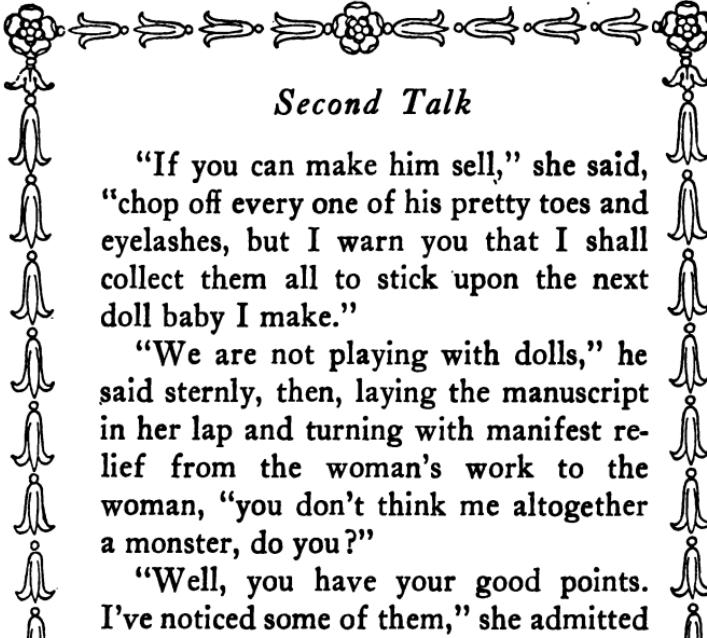
crastinate the day when you are to hate me. Do it over yourself, sacrificing as much as you can, and then we'll go through it again and see how it reads. Now, here is a bit that in some connections might pass, but which, hedged in with practicalities, has a maudlin ring—”

“Oh dear,” murmured the maid, with a catch in her voice, “you are a heartless assassin! I dreamed that in my sleep and lit the gas in the middle of the night to jot it down. It seemed to me that an angel had wakened me on purpose.”

With a quick look of sympathy, the man cut out another relished paragraph as too fanciful.

The maid gave a brave little laugh, because she was appreciating him more than she would have cared to acknowledge.





Second Talk

"If you can make him sell," she said, "chop off every one of his pretty toes and eyelashes, but I warn you that I shall collect them all to stick upon the next doll baby I make."

"We are not playing with dolls," he said sternly, then, laying the manuscript in her lap and turning with manifest relief from the woman's work to the woman, "you don't think me altogether a monster, do you?"

"Well, you have your good points. I've noticed some of them," she admitted thoughtfully.

"And you are a marvel of docility—for a woman," said the man. "You stood it fairly well and I have appreciated the privilege of to-night beyond expression. When may I see you again?" He arose, in unwilling preparation for departure.



A Maid and a Man

She showed a provoking disregard of his ardor. "I can scarcely say. It will take some time to have the *enfant* born again."

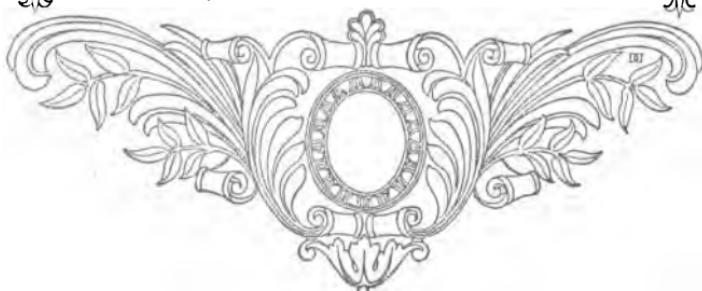
"Miss Lusk, I realize that our acquaintance has been as unconventional as delightful. If you will permit it, I shall be more than glad to satisfy any small question on propriety. I am well known and think I can find satisfactory sponsors."

"You are considerate, but in a mere matter of business it seems rather unessential."

"A man can only propose. It is the woman who disposes."

As he bowed, his attention was caught by the unique awkwardness and power of her hand.

"You have the hand of a musician," he said.





Second Talk

"For once your guess is wrong. I make music with my voice."

"Did I say you were a musician? I meant only that your hand would indicate it."

"It is rash to place your faith in indications."

"Not at all, if you know the code. You sing?"

"I sometimes try to."

"May I stay a moment longer and hear you?"

"You will pardon me, I hope. It is very hard for me to sing to strangers. My voice lacks the technique to make it pleasing to any but those who value feeling alone."

"I am sorry you do not consider me capable of appreciating music. I never shall ask you again."

"Perhaps you are capable, but I feel



A Maid and a Man

when I sing and am so hyper-sensitive about it that if you did not like it I should know and be wretched."

"Never mind, I like your sincerity. Perhaps I don't look like a man with the better grade of instincts, but still, you might have tried me."

His boyish depression made her kind.

"You need not ask again, but some time——"

"Then I am to come again?" he interrupted, with an eagerness it seemed nice to arouse.

"I shall not answer now."

"Do you like me?" he asked naïvely, compelling her level gaze.

"Why, really, isn't that somewhat personal?"

"Certainly, it is personal. Am I not a person, and, although you rightfully





Second Talk

can command many more poetic names,
are you not a person, too? Well?"

"My impressions are often unstable,
but—I seem to be going to," she said.

"Good enough. When can we pro-
ceed?"

"I cannot tell exactly about the
story—"

"Please don't use the story as a screen,
for you are bound to see me as a person
shining through. It is not dense enough
to hide me. It must be hurried, of
course, but in the interim? I have of-
fered to arrange conventionalities."

She straightened and regarded him
thoughtfully.

"You are adept, I see. Of course you
would ask to come again. There might
be an awkward pause if you didn't. I
shall not answer now. I seldom bother
with a man who does not wish to see me



A Maid and a Man

very much. Ask me again if you like, but I shall be quite unperturbed if reflection cools your zeal."

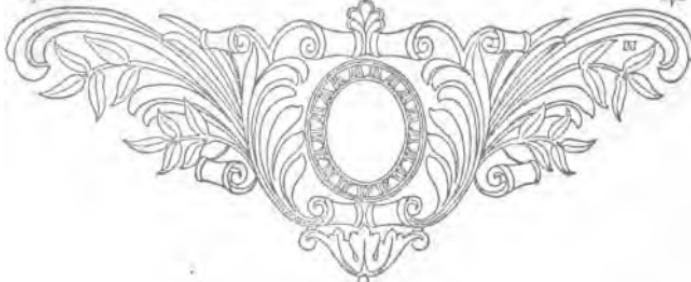
"To think that you should have remembered just in time the policy of forcing a man to coax," he said sadly.

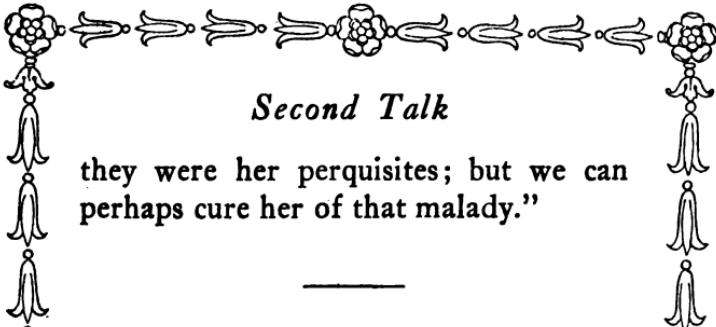
"You have been very gentle with my little story. Here is my hand and a good-night."

He smiled whimsically over her hand.

"For small crumbs, lady, I thank you. You will hear from me again. Good-night."

"She's a sweet little somebody," he told himself, as the vestibule door thudded behind him, dropping the words inside the collar of his storm-coat.
"Takes a fellow's devotions as though





Second Talk

they were her perquisites; but we can perhaps cure her of that malady."

The maid poked for some time at the fire, and for every time she'd poke would toss towards it a smile, so that the brightness in the grate seemed to come from the expression on her face.

"Well, he seems to be a congenial little soul," she confided to it, artlessly. "But is he a riddle, I wonder? Either a boyish man or a mannish boy? I really cannot decide."

At the moment, however, the answer did not matter much, for in the rosy fire-glow she saw him placed in his Future, a glorified, capitalized Future, which assured her that his advanced tricks were



A Maid and a Man

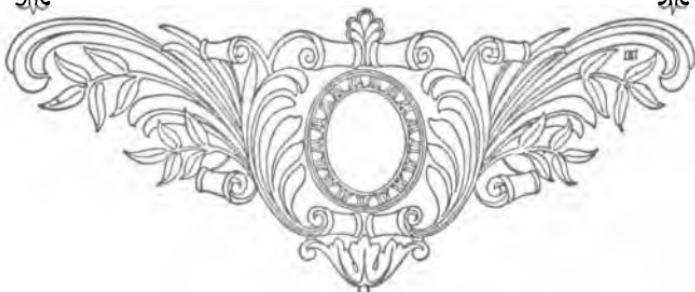
only a premature adoption of the manners great men need.

"At any rate," she thought, "I could never have chosen a more suitable aid in my experiment."

Then from beneath a coal which she overturned, there started up another figure, dark, stalwart and strong, Banks, the cause of her capricious test, with his personality that had ruled her and his mind that had often stumbled far in the wake of her own.

She frowned at the flame reproachfully.

"You promised," she adjured it, "you said you would let me try and the time has only begun. I *have* the right to experiment. Did you not agree with me on that? That one of the few real privileges of a woman is to hold herself absolutely open to conviction. Don't you





Second Talk

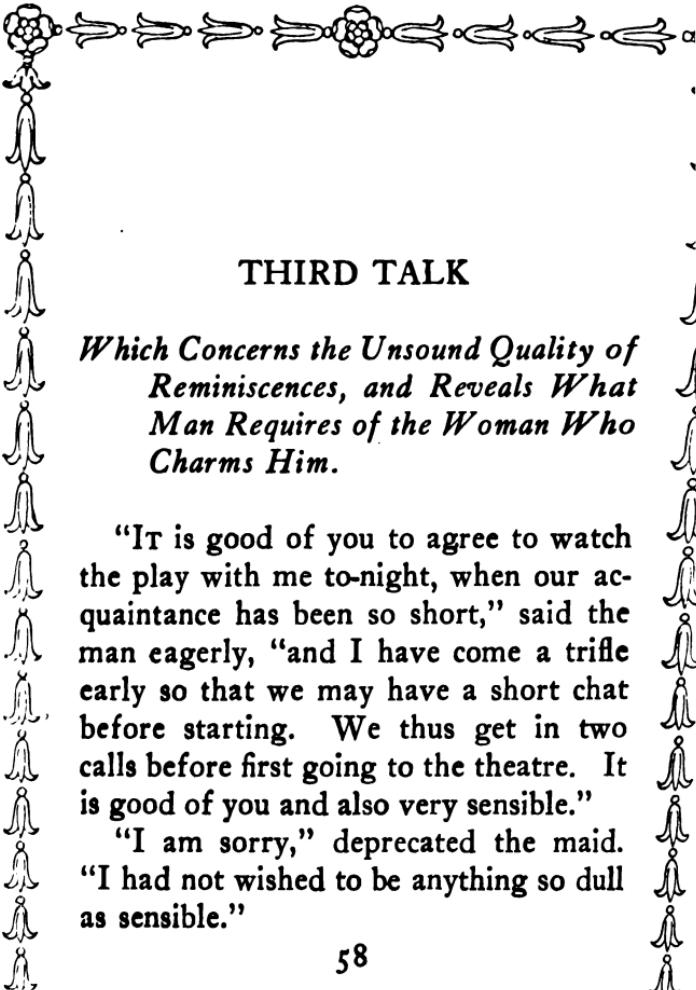
remember how I told you it was quite the largest concession I had ever known a man to make? I *am* sincere and I want only what is right."

Her frown had long since changed to a wistful smile and there was the shimmer of tears in her eyes.

"Won't you continue to be large?" she coaxed. "*Perhaps* you will be rewarded. Then leave me! Leave me to cure myself, if possible, with—my antidote."

As though exhausted by the argument, the coals tumbled in the grate and the warm, red light went out.





THIRD TALK

Which Concerns the Unsound Quality of Reminiscences, and Reveals What Man Requires of the Woman Who Charms Him.

"It is good of you to agree to watch the play with me to-night, when our acquaintance has been so short," said the man eagerly, "and I have come a trifle early so that we may have a short chat before starting. We thus get in two calls before first going to the theatre. It is good of you and also very sensible."

"I am sorry," deprecated the maid. "I had not wished to be anything so dull as sensible."



Third Talk

He laughed.

"I have offered to arrange conventions, but I quite like your unconventionality."

"Well," she observed cheerfully, "it is a pleasant way of earning your approval."

"There is something more in it than mere approval," he returned. "It touches on a principle of mine. I believe, Miss Lusk, that the right sort of woman can always recognize the right sort of man instantly. What do you think about it?"

The maid hesitated. "By the 'right sort of man,'" she asked at length, "do you mean merely a gentleman, or a gentleman with a satisfying mind?"

"That," he expounded promptly, although he had never thought of it before, "depends entirely upon the grade of woman. A man to be 'right' for you



A Maid and a Man

must be thoroughly gentle, of course, and also very keen."

"Then," answered the maid, "I do not know. Once I should have agreed with you. Now I do not know."

"That is too bad." He looked at her narrowly. "You have thrown down your best weapon."

"I did not throw it down. It was forced from me."

"Trust in yourself and in him is your keenest sabre in bouts with a man. Can't you get it back?"

"I do try, but I am afraid I can never quite trust my own judgment again."

"That is indeed too bad. Perhaps I can help you," he said, strutting across the room, his hands in his pockets. By this activity he missed seeing her cautious smile; even had he not missed it, he



Third Talk

probably would have failed to understand.

There never has been a mirror made in all the world that can show people how other people think they look.

"Let us talk of something else," she said, with a shrug.

"Why can't we talk about us?" was his suggestion.

"Considering what devotees to precedent most men and women are, and how many ages they have spent discussing each other, your idea lacks the spice of novelty."

"Don't pose," he said. "Cynicism is a pose with you."

"Now you are unreasonable," she protested. "I thought your ideal woman, you know, must be a cynic to all the world excepting—"



A Maid and a Man

"Yes, so don't be a cynic to me," he said.

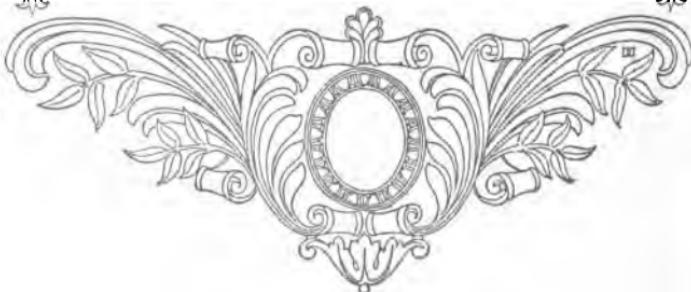
Then, because they both were remembering, the premature assumption in his words stood blushing shyly between them.

The fire chuckled in the grate.

"Well," she observed at last, "I will agree to discuss ourselves provided we put it in the past tense. The things we recite from our pasts always seem supremely attractive beside the facts of the present."

The man nodded wisely. "And here is the reason for it. We forget the prosaic details and mention only what is sanctioned as worth telling by the wear and tear of time."

"That is very knowing of you," said she, with the punctilious admiration his manner demanded; then added, with a





Third Talk

wicked intent to draw him out, "Along the shore of your past I suppose there have been many wrecks?"

"Do I not still look seaworthy?"
"I was referring to the weaker vessels," she urged.

The irony of her smile quite failed to warn him, so wrapped was he in instant reminiscences.

"I have had some gusty times in my day," he began, "and I have seen many a ship go down."

"I love stories of adventure," she coaxed.

"The electricity in some of mine might make you nervous."

"Are they, then, such flashy tales?"
"I have seen some gay nights and some intoxicating women," he continued, disregarding both the metaphor and her remark, "dazzling tropical birds, whose



A Maid and a Man

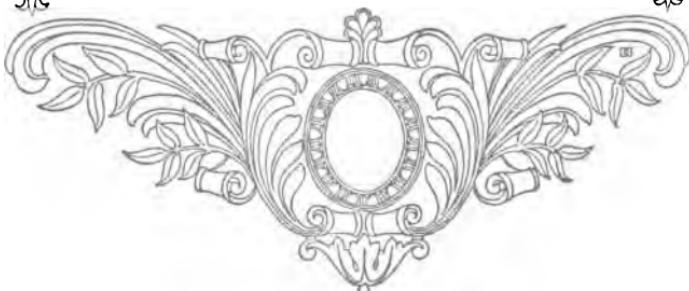
profession it was to befuddle older heads than mine. They used to call me 'The Angel Child,' because I looked so coy and young. This idea put them so off guard that often they were natural, which made things enchantingly dangerous. But the excitement of the games came in the finales, when 'The Angel Child' proved he was a man. The proof he was not a fledgling came in his strength to make them finales."

"You were very cruel," inserted the maid in such a taunting tone that he perceived his misstep.

"But a man doesn't tell such adventures to a woman like you," he added.

"Then a man's secretiveness depends only upon the quality of his auditor?"

"Besides being bound to silence by honor," he proceeded, now sure of his cue, "there is no real joy in the telling.





Third Talk

When one has a bright blaze in the present, reminiscences are only punk."

"Yours must have been well lighted, for you seem quite warmed by the subject."

"Was it you who blew the embers, or was it I?" he demanded.

"The woman, she did it," said the maid disagreeably. "I hoped I could not make you boast of your conquests."

"Comparing the bulk of what I might tell with what I have told, my reticence seems to me admirable," he suggested cheerfully.

"I had hopes of you," said the maid gravely, "but it appeals to me as doing a man more justice to do him a little actual injustice."

The man shed her small barb with a laugh.

"You are Irish to the quick!" he ex-



A Maid and a Man

claimed. "Your temper, the absurd things you say, the freckles on your nose—I believe I'll call you Pat. Doesn't that fit? That is your name now, Pat."

"I have been hoarding one for you, but lack the courage to speak it."

"Tell me," he coaxed prettily.

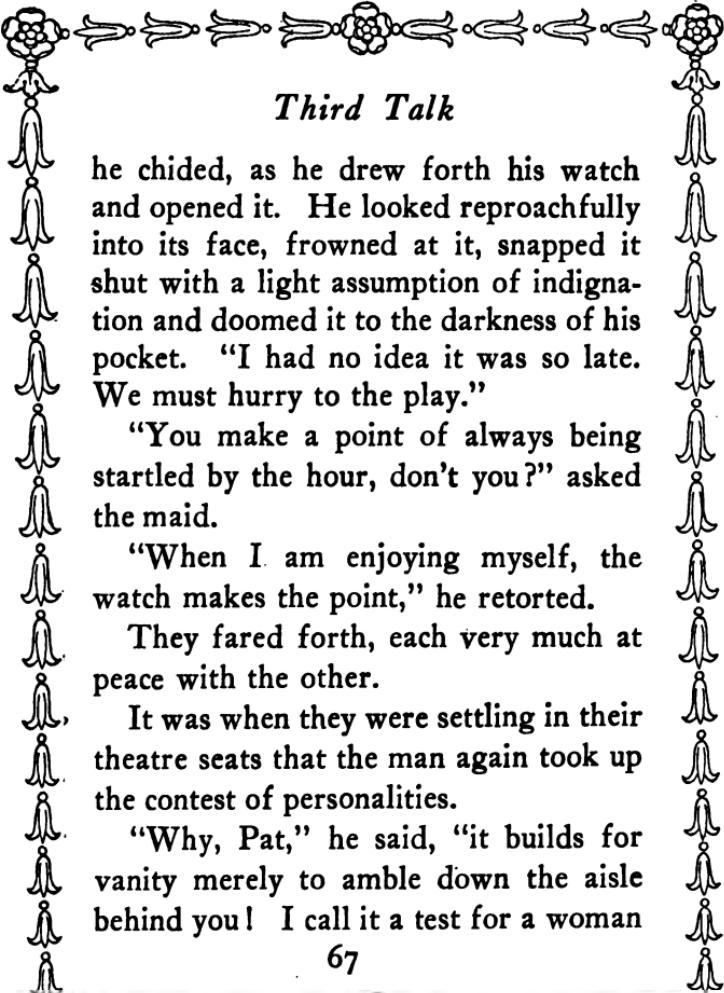
"No. Some time you will guess it; then pride in your own acumen may somewhat blunt its edge."

"You are bad to me again; but never mind, we're getting on." He hesitated, and then dared a question that he had ordered off as far too untimely, earlier in their talk. "Is there another man, Pat? I have a fancy for knowing."

"If I wished to acknowledge another man," said the maid, tucking at her hair with the bare fingers of her left hand, "I should be wearing his ring."

"In either case you are very unkind,"





Third Talk

he chided, as he drew forth his watch and opened it. He looked reproachfully into its face, frowned at it, snapped it shut with a light assumption of indignation and doomed it to the darkness of his pocket. "I had no idea it was so late. We must hurry to the play."

"You make a point of always being startled by the hour, don't you?" asked the maid.

"When I am enjoying myself, the watch makes the point," he retorted.

They fared forth, each very much at peace with the other.

It was when they were settling in their theatre seats that the man again took up the contest of personalities.

"Why, Pat," he said, "it builds for vanity merely to amble down the aisle behind you! I call it a test for a woman



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to appear super-effective in this small world of nothing but effect."

"That isn't an overwhelming compliment," returned the maid, as they struggled with the sleeves of her cloak, "because it is so dark that I can scarcely recognize who I am."

"That is unnecessary. The theatre is the one place where it is not essential to be anybody. Nobody can see whether you are or not. But I don't withdraw my compliment, because I am glad——"

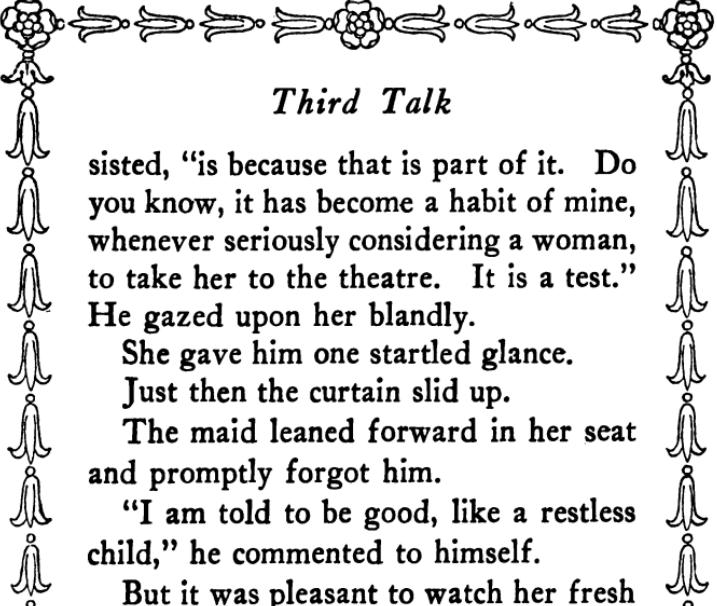
"You do realize that you are required to be nothing but a spectator?" she interrupted.

"It is indeed the only place where one may be mentally comatose."

"They why this expenditure of conversation? We cannot expect to rival what is going on up there."

"And the reason I am glad," he per-





Third Talk

sisted, "is because that is part of it. Do you know, it has become a habit of mine, whenever seriously considering a woman, to take her to the theatre. It is a test." He gazed upon her blandly.

She gave him one startled glance.

Just then the curtain slid up.

The maid leaned forward in her seat and promptly forgot him.

"I am told to be good, like a restless child," he commented to himself.

But it was pleasant to watch her fresh absorption. He found the far corner of his chair and began to study her profile. His thoughts seemed quite superior to the play. His lips were pursed meditatively and his eyes narrowed for perspective.

She turned toward him, as though to speak, and for a moment they leaned to-



A Maid and a Man

gether in nearness sanctioned by the whisper.

"Perhaps it would be more worth the price of admission to watch the stage," she said severely, although her mouth curved in a scarlet smile.

"Money is no object so long as I have some, and, for the time being, I seem satisfied with—just you," he replied.

Perhaps it was her eyes, or her smile, perhaps only the scent from the white violets she wore. At any rate, the romantic gloom of a theatre during the acts condones many an impulse. She felt his breath drift across her cheek and noticed with surprise that his fingers were tautly tangled. She was amazed at the look on his face.

An immediate and cordial dislike for their relation arose to the surface of her manner. Rapidly considering her method



Third Talk

of acquiring this friend, she felt as women do when rubbing off the spurious gilt of a bargain-counter bauble.

In her face he read only surprise.

"Sometimes I've no doubt that I seem old and experienced," he whispered, as though sipping a cordial, "but one's receptive faculties have their limit when one has to begin all over again. Some folks get old enough in experience to feel almost young again. A few actually do get back to the enjoyment stage again."

"But it is quite too literal to look so embarrassed," she answered.

"It is only the hardened sinners who ever outgrow embarrassment."

"Then why don't you?" she insinuated rudely.

"And sitting next to you, Pat, would flutter a bronze Indian."



A Maid and a Man

The maid shivered. "That sounds so crude," she said.

"It feels like that," he answered.

Until the ending of the act they faced the world of mimicry.

But the mind of the man was still toying with the problem that vexed him.

"Well," he concluded reluctantly, "I suppose we shall have to introduce more of finesse. Nature in the concrete evidently will not do for this little one. She would soon degenerate into insipidity or absolute insolence. But we don't like to be mentally vigilant, do we? It is much more comfy to be only natural."

The ornate curtain finished a fraction of the play. Lights flashed in frames around the boxes, defined like magic margins the curve of the balconies and illumined the dome with a dazzlement that would have shamed a collusion of





Third Talk

the sun, the moon and all the stars of the night.

Everyone blinked confusedly at the glare, minds drifted home to selves, fans were waved, women remembered to tuck at their coiffures, mouths laughed and eyes sought the warming glances of other eyes.

The audience, that had seemed moulded into one vast body, had disintegrated, with the whisking on of the lights, into the unital versatility of numbers.

Inversely, the musicians crawled from their holes as units, to become mere components of an orchestra, as their music began teasing the air with a strain that aroused the imagination and lent the dignity of accompaniment to the most trivial of retorts.

The attention of the maid returned



A Maid and a Man

from a tour around the house to the man, subservient to the necessity of making talk.

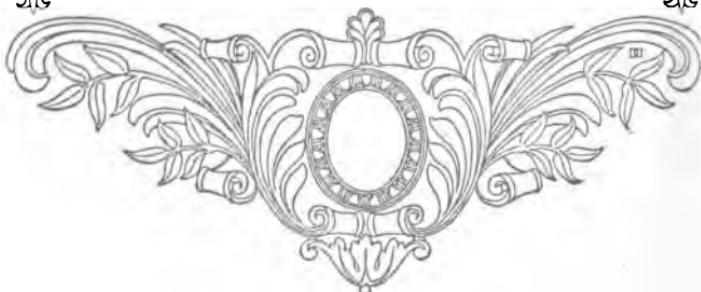
"There is a contagion about this dramatic business," she said. "Everybody is attempting a part. But their efforts seem tinsel and shoddy."

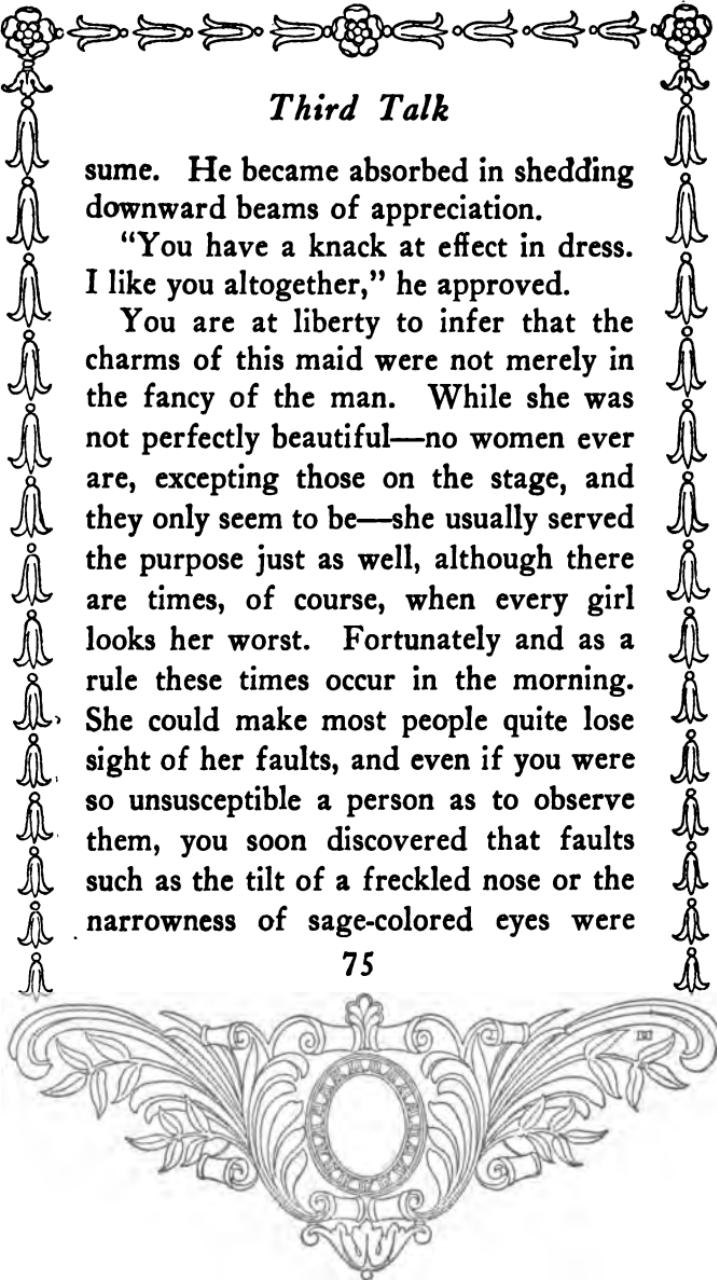
"We cannot all be stars."

"I wish they wouldn't try," she complained. "They are all trying to let on they're happy."

"It has a good enough effect to me," he said, looking about him with a monocle sort of stare. "You also," he added, turning the monocle full upon her.

She was slightly sunk in her seat, which allowed him such an advantage in height that he could bend toward and above her at the angle men like to as-





Third Talk

sume. He became absorbed in shedding downward beams of appreciation.

"You have a knack at effect in dress. I like you altogether," he approved.

You are at liberty to infer that the charms of this maid were not merely in the fancy of the man. While she was not perfectly beautiful—no women ever are, excepting those on the stage, and they only seem to be—she usually served the purpose just as well, although there are times, of course, when every girl looks her worst. Fortunately and as a rule these times occur in the morning. She could make most people quite lose sight of her faults, and even if you were so unsusceptible a person as to observe them, you soon discovered that faults such as the tilt of a freckled nose or the narrowness of sage-colored eyes were



A Maid and a Man

far more piquant than the conventional restrictions of perfection.

The maid was dressed in black. Her arms and shoulders stood out in a bold pattern from the background of her lace gown. Wrinkled gloves protected her forearms and the man searched in dismay for the 'kerchief that he had before noticed tucked up her wrist. In his thoughts it had grown to seem characteristic, and he was relieved to discover it fluting out coquettishly with the ruff at her elbow. He was wise to know that its realness lent luxury to her toilette.

"There is no doubt about it," he observed at length. "Looks count."

She moved restively.

"Looks are not an objection," she said indifferently.

"Meaning good looks, Pat?"

The maid gave him a second startled





Third Talk

glance, then sat upright in her chair and smoothed down her dress with great self-respect.

"Good looks, of course," she sniffed.
"Bad ones are not worth mentioning."

"Like most dogmatisms, that one is only partially right," remarked the man, with difficulty concealing his joy at this early advent of his opportunity. "Once or so in a lifetime there is a girl pretty enough to be nothing else. But it is when ugliness gets stamped on a man's heart that true devotion springs."

"Here, then, is a real axiom," jeered the maid: "Every woman is lovable."

"I don't say that," temporized the man. "But I do say that every woman can be lovable. No matter how plain, how shy or how otherwise unattractive, she can cultivate a method to please the genus man."



A Maid and a Man

"Cultivate?" shuddered the maid.
"That sounds earthy. And women are so constitutionally lazy! Besides, does any woman ever realize that she is plain or unattractive?"

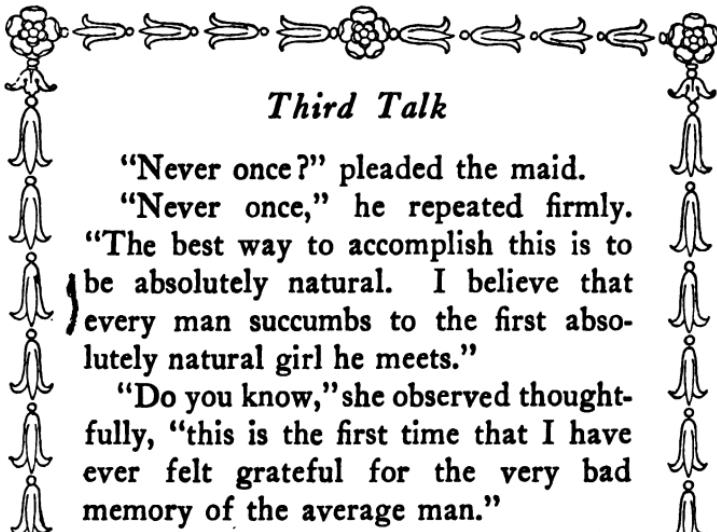
"That is why very few of them use
the method."

"You sound knowing. Suppose you try to tell me, according to your views, just what a woman must have to fascinate the average man."

"Pat," he inquired, with an injured look, "how should I know?"

She laughed. "Can't your imagination descend, as well as soar?"

"I'll try," he expanded, under this apology. "The average man requires two principle attributes in the woman who is to fascinate him. For one, she must impress him at once with the sense that he has never met her before."



Third Talk

"Never once?" pleaded the maid.

"Never once," he repeated firmly.

"The best way to accomplish this is to be absolutely natural. I believe that every man succumbs to the first absolutely natural girl he meets."

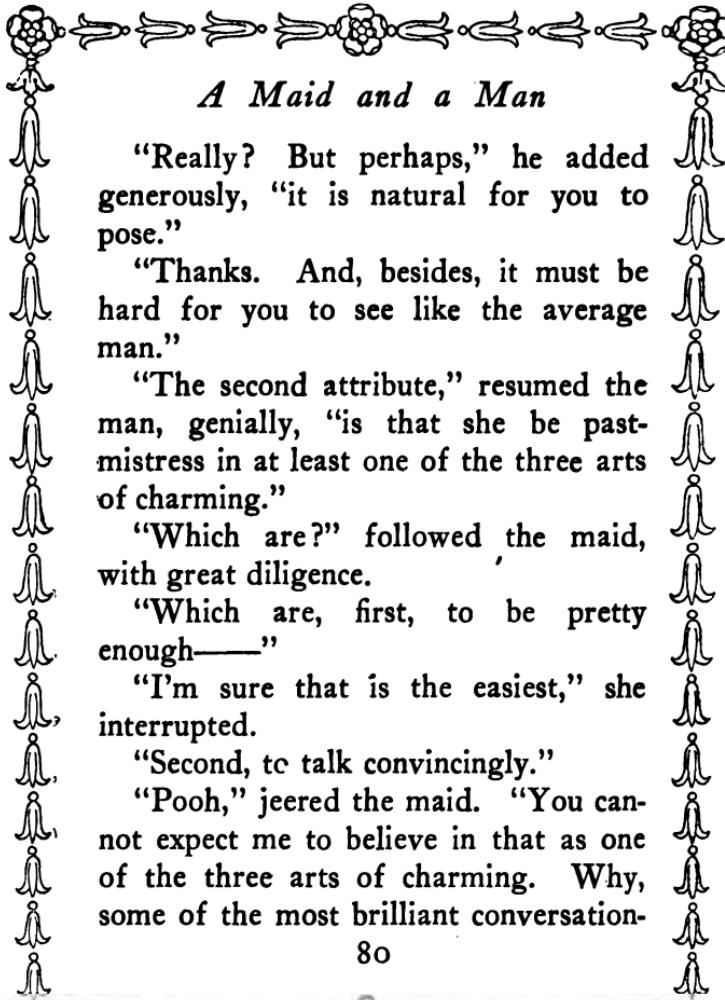
"Do you know," she observed thoughtfully, "this is the first time that I have ever felt grateful for the very bad memory of the average man."

"You should, Pat," he regretted, "for I often doubt whether you are really natural. You seem to be simply a genius at posing."

"Don't forbid it here, please, in the playhouse," she besought him.

"It does seem rather pardonable."

"Why, it is such a habit with me," she confessed, "that often I cannot face the chairs and tables at home. They look so normal and reproachful."



A Maid and a Man

"Really? But perhaps," he added generously, "it is natural for you to pose."

"Thanks. And, besides, it must be hard for you to see like the average man."

"The second attribute," resumed the man, genially, "is that she be past-mistress in at least one of the three arts of charming."

"Which are?" followed the maid, with great diligence.

"Which are, first, to be pretty enough—"

"I'm sure that is the easiest," she interrupted.

"Second, to talk convincingly."

"Pooh," jeered the maid. "You cannot expect me to believe in that as one of the three arts of charming. Why, some of the most brilliant conversa-





Third Talk

alists I know are the loneliest women—until they join clubs for relief. It seems best they should take it out on each other.” She sighed.

“But, Pat——” he began to defend.

“And not long ago,” continued the maid eagerly, “I experimented with a man and a girl who disproved your statement utterly. She labored under the challenge of brilliancy and was expected to marry well. But she seemed to have her lonely moments. He was young, enthusiastic and endowed with good matrimonial assets. I arranged his first call upon her personally and left them to do the rest. But he never went again. It seemed so ungrateful of them that I demanded explanations. She was indignant. ‘Oh, my dear, it was dreadful,’ she said. ‘Why, I spent a whole miserable evening trying to prevent him from



A Maid and a Man

talking entirely about himself.' He was positively pathetic. 'Yes, she can talk all right,' he agreed, 'but she doesn't talk about the right things.' "

"And there you have it," exulted the man. "There are many people who can talk incessantly about anything that comes into their heads, but the value of conversation lies in the choice of topics. If your girl friend had only chosen wisely from her store of subject matter just what would be adapted to this particular youth, instead of snatching them up haphazard——"

"But why shouldn't she please herself? It seems rather a low ambition to be always trying to please the average man."

"My child," he reproved gravely, "that is the cross of woman. Besides, I thought that was part of our treatise,





Third Talk

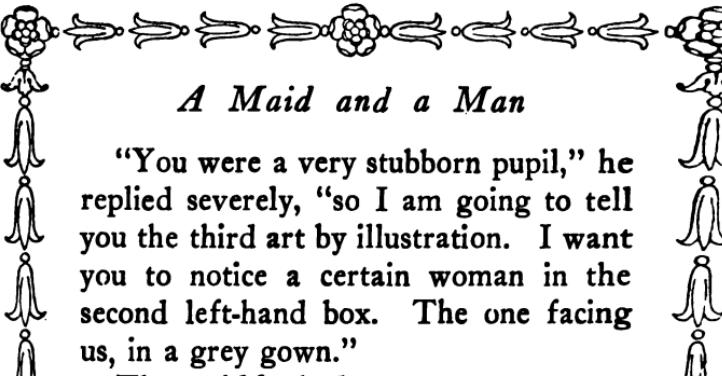
'The average man, how to captivate and hold him.' "

"So it was," she assented vaguely. "But there," she added, her manner changing at once to that of an exuberant child, "the footlights are coming to life!"

It has always impressed me that the zenith of histrionic power is reached when, by the arbitrary tinkling of a bell, ourselves and our ideas, wontedly so absorbing, are made to seem quite false and extrinsic.

When the interim between the second and third acts granted recess from this make-believe real life, the mind of the maid returned perforce to her prattle with the man.

"You gave me the first and second of the three arts of charming," she said. "What, if you please, is the third?"



A Maid and a Man

"You were a very stubborn pupil," he replied severely, "so I am going to tell you the third art by illustration. I want you to notice a certain woman in the second left-hand box. The one facing us, in a grey gown."

The maid looked.

"I see such a one," she replied, "but observe nothing interesting about her, except the meager fact that she is a woman."

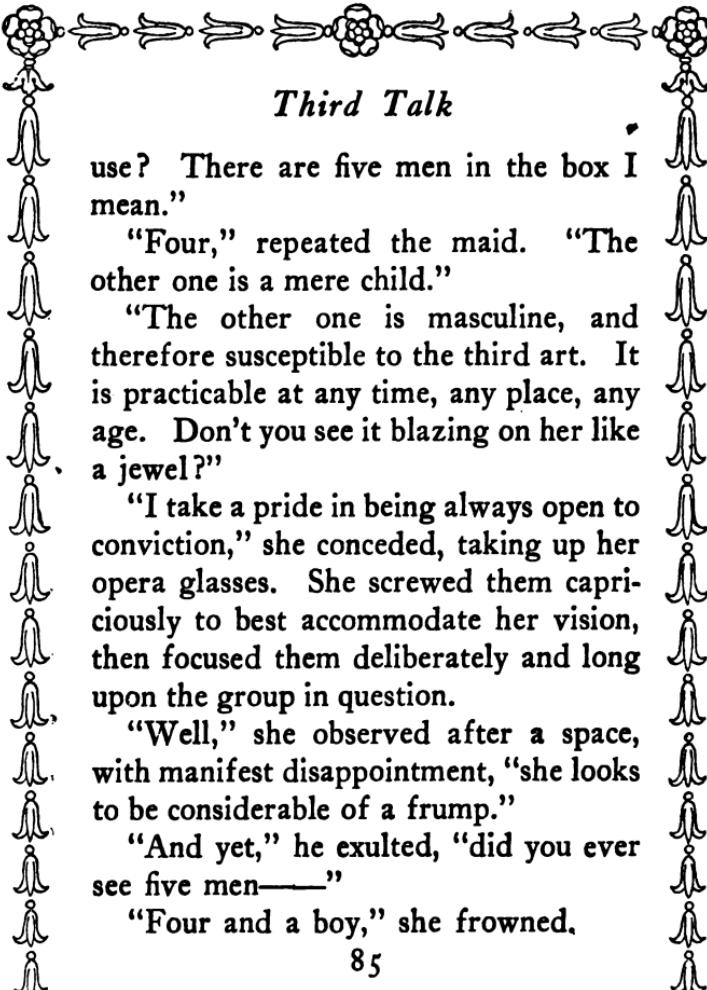
"Then look again. Doesn't it strike you at once as interesting that there should be five men in front of her, each with his back to the stage?"

"I meant nothing interesting about the woman herself."

"Aren't the five men about her?"

"Four," corrected the maid.

"I grant that your eyes are ornamental, Pat; but why not inure them to



Third Talk

use? There are five men in the box I mean."

"Four," repeated the maid. "The other one is a mere child."

"The other one is masculine, and therefore susceptible to the third art. It is practicable at any time, any place, any age. Don't you see it blazing on her like a jewel?"

"I take a pride in being always open to conviction," she conceded, taking up her opera glasses. She screwed them capriciously to best accommodate her vision, then focused them deliberately and long upon the group in question.

"Well," she observed after a space, with manifest disappointment, "she looks to be considerable of a frump."

"And yet," he exulted, "did you ever see five men—"

"Four and a boy," she frowned.



A Maid and a Man

"Five masculines more content to play vassal to a queen in all your life?"

"I have never seen a queen," digressed the maid, with an inviting glance.

"Try the glasses again," he responded brutally, remembering her earlier distaste of him.

"Humph," commented the maid. Then she leaned back resignedly. "What, then, is this third art?"

"I should rather you would see it for yourself. Notice her eyes. They are naturally nondescript, but are magnificent to-night with intensity and promise. Her figure is really too wisp-like, but see the abandon of it. Her mind hasn't time to bother about her figure, so it follows her mind. That is nature. Then, just watch her expression change. Admiration, amusement, wonder, all are there, something special for each of the five. The





Third Talk

most significant thing about her, however, is that she has totally forgotten the rest of the house."

"You seem to have a wonderful perception, considering the distance—and without glasses, too!"

"That woman," continued the man, "is one I have met at the Country Club several times, and wondered about often. She is meagerly endowed and has none of the ordinary acquirements, yet there is no beauty at the club so seductive to the men or so well supplied with other people's automobiles, golfsticks and husbands."

"That is easy. She's an heiress," stated the maid, with a faintly vixenish glance toward the lady in the box. "Why didn't I guess it before? The third art is to be rich."

"Not keen enough for you, Pat. If



A Maid and a Man

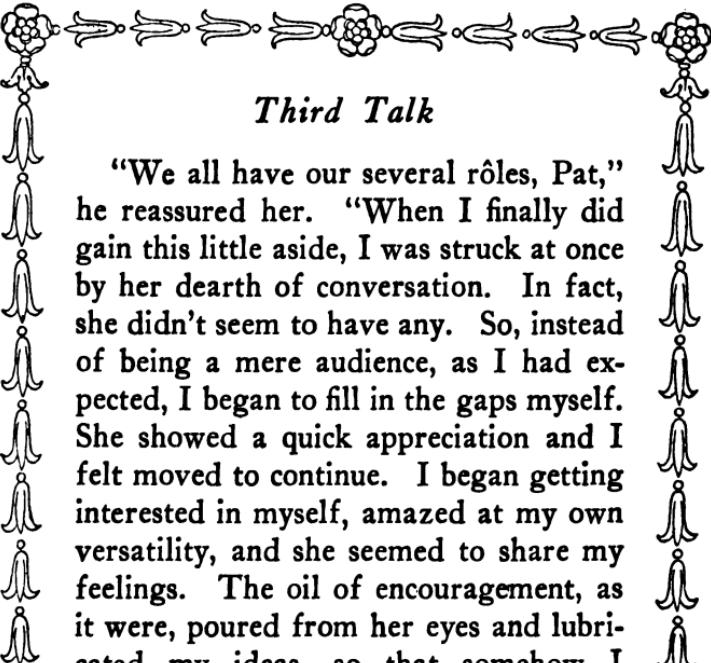
it were money, some one man would have obtained a monopoly of her long ago and claimed all her attention thereafter earning his salary."

"Then there is only one answer left. Men are regaining their sense of humor and this particular lady has wit."

"Exactly the conviction I came to myself—until I knew." The man looked at her more approvingly. "I saw her continually surrounded, everyone near her radiant, and concluded she was gifted with what I was taught as a boy to regard as wit. But when I finally succeeded in managing a tête-à-tête—" "

"Oh," murmured the maid, plucking at her violets, "I understood the third art to be effective only with the average man."

His quick look of suspicion soon gave place to one almost benign.

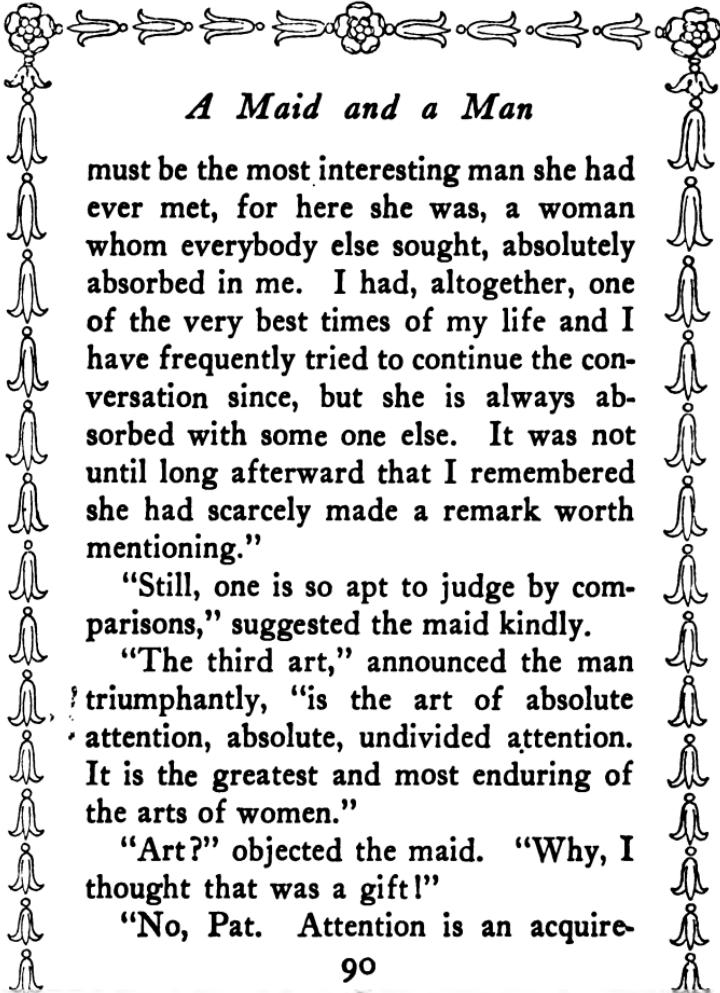


Third Talk

"We all have our several rôles, Pat," he reassured her. "When I finally did gain this little aside, I was struck at once by her dearth of conversation. In fact, she didn't seem to have any. So, instead of being a mere audience, as I had expected, I began to fill in the gaps myself. She showed a quick appreciation and I felt moved to continue. I began getting interested in myself, amazed at my own versatility, and she seemed to share my feelings. The oil of encouragement, as it were, poured from her eyes and lubricated my ideas, so that somehow I continued to talk, and talked better than I have ever done in my life."

"Oh, surely," deprecated the maid. "But, of course, it must be slick to see one's thoughts reflected in oily eyes."

"Yes, I believe I did talk smoothly. And why not? I felt convinced that I



A Maid and a Man

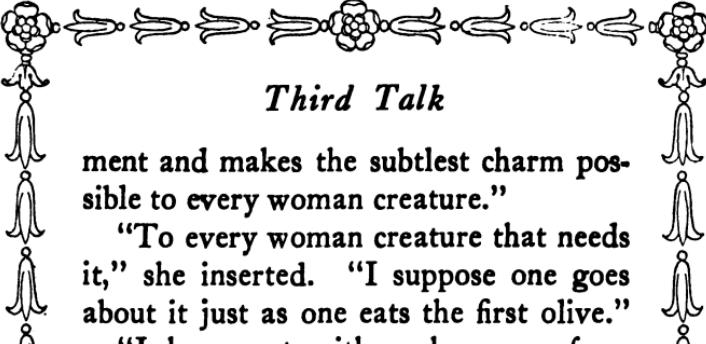
must be the most interesting man she had ever met, for here she was, a woman whom everybody else sought, absolutely absorbed in me. I had, altogether, one of the very best times of my life and I have frequently tried to continue the conversation since, but she is always absorbed with some one else. It was not until long afterward that I remembered she had scarcely made a remark worth mentioning."

"Still, one is so apt to judge by comparisons," suggested the maid kindly.

"The third art," announced the man triumphantly, "is the art of absolute attention, absolute, undivided attention. It is the greatest and most enduring of the arts of women."

"Art?" objected the maid. "Why, I thought that was a gift!"

"No, Pat. Attention is an acquire-



Third Talk

ment and makes the subtlest charm possible to every woman creature."

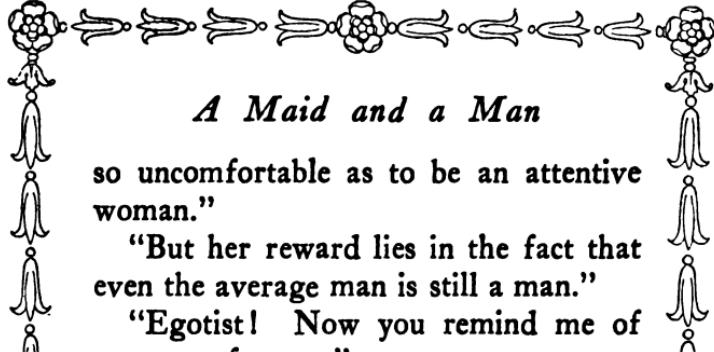
"To every woman creature that needs it," she inserted. "I suppose one goes about it just as one eats the first olive."

"I hope not with such a wry face, Pat."

"And that, I suppose, greatly enhances the—the oily condition."

"Of course it is an acquired taste." His tone was reproving. "It stands to reason that no woman would prefer listening to a man explain himself to her when all the time she might be telling him about herself."

"Or dictating the third art, as illustrated by a grey woman in a theatre box," added the maid, with revelation in her tones. "I think him a very selfish man who would require a woman to be



A Maid and a Man

so uncomfortable as to be an attentive woman."

"But her reward lies in the fact that even the average man is still a man."

"Egotist! Now you remind me of my name for you."

"Then tell me," he coaxed.

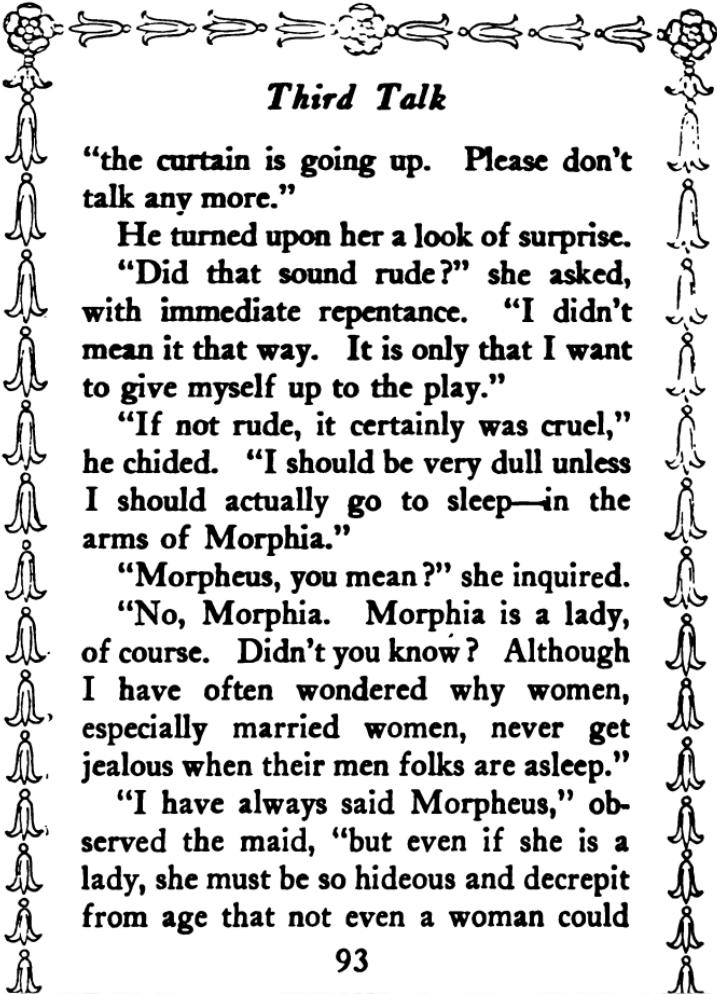
"Do not tempt me. You make it hard, but I am trying to be nice to you to-night, when, by bringing me, you are being so nice to me. It is really very, very nice to be nice."

"If you can't be anything else," he said.

"I mean the modern brew of nice that leaves all the savor in and extracts the insipidity."

"Thanks," he said. "I shall treasure the word."

"In a moment," she said hesitatingly,



Third Talk

"the curtain is going up. Please don't talk any more."

He turned upon her a look of surprise.

"Did that sound rude?" she asked, with immediate repentance. "I didn't mean it that way. It is only that I want to give myself up to the play."

"If not rude, it certainly was cruel," he chided. "I should be very dull unless I should actually go to sleep—in the arms of Morphia."

"Morpheus, you mean?" she inquired.

"No, Morphia. Morphia is a lady, of course. Didn't you know? Although I have often wondered why women, especially married women, never get jealous when their men folks are asleep."

"I have always said Morpheus," observed the maid, "but even if she is a lady, she must be so hideous and decrepit from age that not even a woman could



A Maid and a Man

possibly be jealous of her. She has also been mighty promiscuous. All sorts and conditions of men have lain in her embrace since the world began."

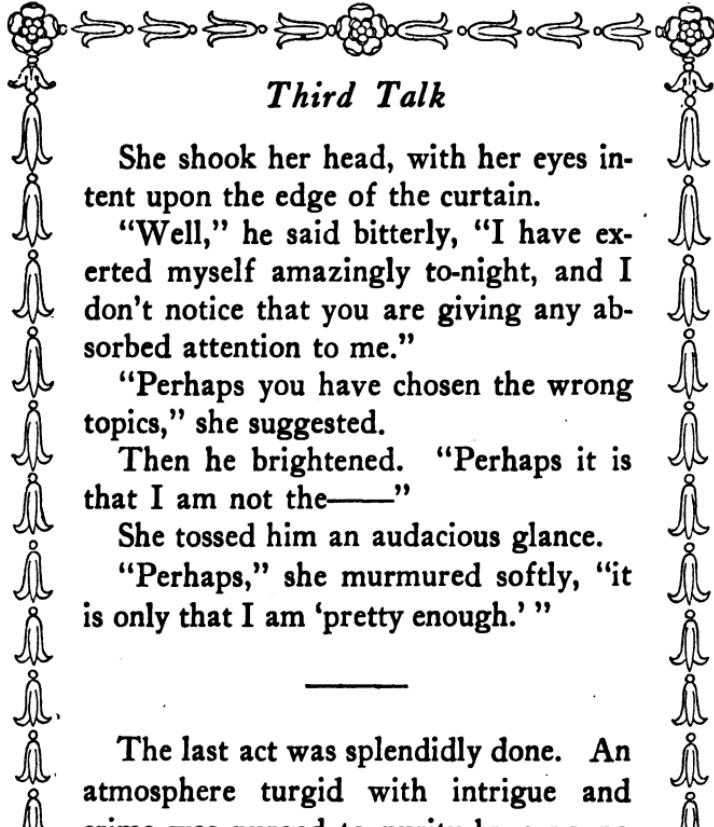
"Morphia is old in years, it is true, but about her looks you are quite wrong. She is very beautiful."

"Pooh!" scoffed the maid.

"Don't you see that, since sleep gives youth and beauty, Morphia, who is sleep itself, is the very spirit of beauty?"

"That is such a good place to stop. I'm sure you can't do any better, so don't talk any more, please?" coaxed the maid, as the curtain moved and a slender section of the make-believe world was widened slowly before them.

"Is it that you prefer the second of the arts of women and prefer to monopolize the conversation yourself?"



Third Talk

She shook her head, with her eyes intent upon the edge of the curtain.

"Well," he said bitterly, "I have exerted myself amazingly to-night, and I don't notice that you are giving any absorbed attention to me."

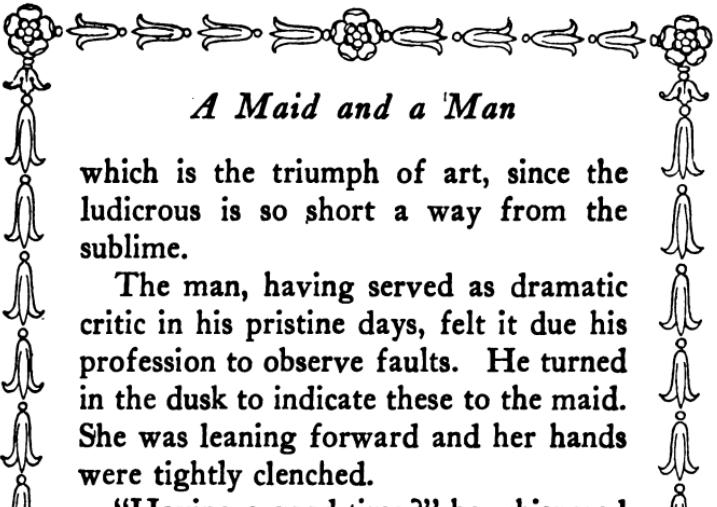
"Perhaps you have chosen the wrong topics," she suggested.

Then he brightened. "Perhaps it is that I am not the—"

She tossed him an audacious glance.

"Perhaps," she murmured softly, "it is only that I am 'pretty enough.' "

The last act was splendidly done. An atmosphere turgid with intrigue and crime was purged to purity by a young girl's renunciation of her life. The death scene sounded a vibrant chord of pathos,



A Maid and a Man

which is the triumph of art, since the ludicrous is so short a way from the sublime.

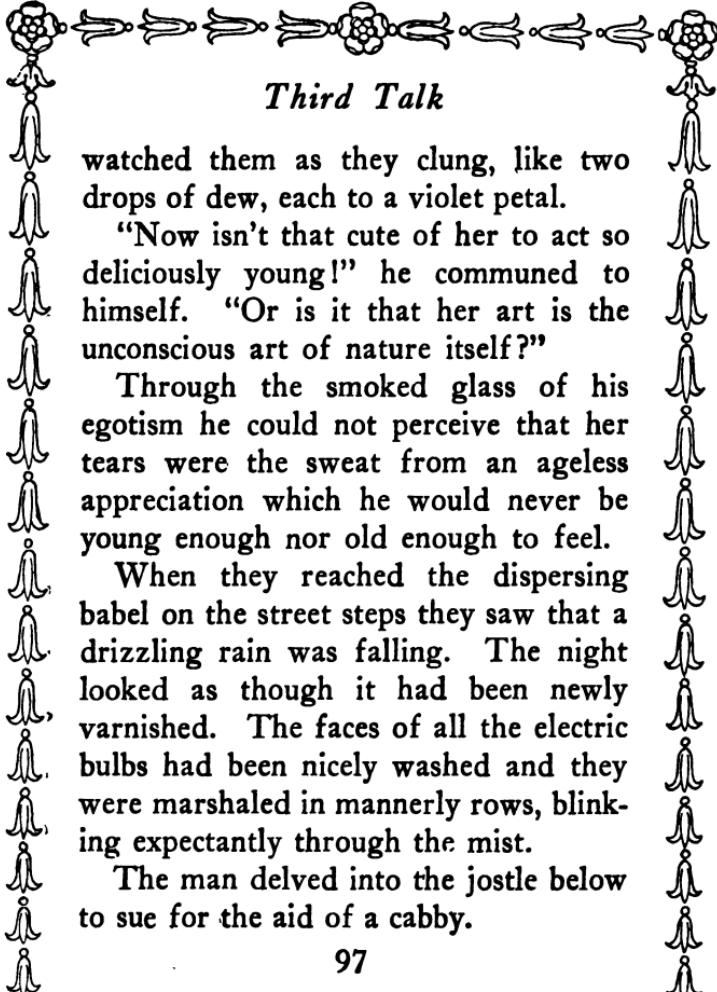
The man, having served as dramatic critic in his pristine days, felt it due his profession to observe faults. He turned in the dusk to indicate these to the maid. She was leaning forward and her hands were tightly clenched.

"Having a good time?" he whispered into her absorption.

As she did not answer, he peered into her face.

"Why, Pat," he said, "you're palpitating—you're actually palpitating! You are only a child, after all. Next time we'll go to see 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' "

When he realized why her eyes were averted, he felt an increased amazement, but somehow found nothing further to say. He saw them as they fell and



Third Talk

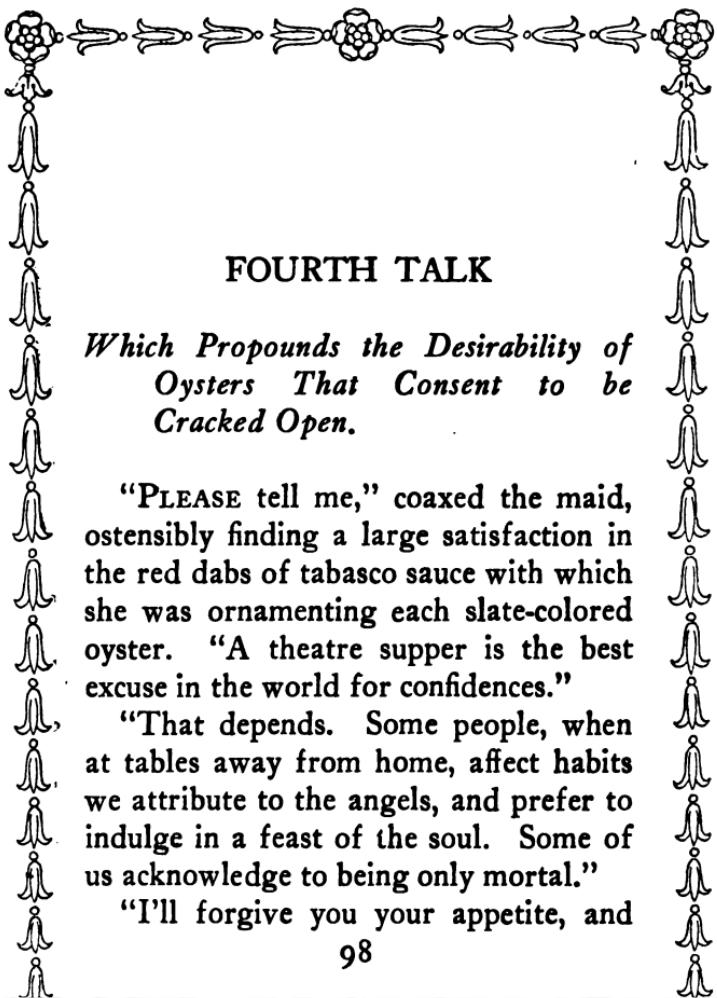
watched them as they clung, like two drops of dew, each to a violet petal.

"Now isn't that cute of her to act so deliciously young!" he communed to himself. "Or is it that her art is the unconscious art of nature itself?"

Through the smoked glass of his egotism he could not perceive that her tears were the sweat from an ageless appreciation which he would never be young enough nor old enough to feel.

When they reached the dispersing babel on the street steps they saw that a drizzling rain was falling. The night looked as though it had been newly varnished. The faces of all the electric bulbs had been nicely washed and they were marshaled in mannerly rows, blinking expectantly through the mist.

The man delved into the jostle below to sue for the aid of a cabby.



FOURTH TALK

*Which Propounds the Desirability of
Oysters That Consent to be
Cracked Open.*

"PLEASE tell me," coaxed the maid, ostensibly finding a large satisfaction in the red dabs of tabasco sauce with which she was ornamenting each slate-colored oyster. "A theatre supper is the best excuse in the world for confidences."

"That depends. Some people, when at tables away from home, affect habits we attribute to the angels, and prefer to indulge in a feast of the soul. Some of us acknowledge to being only mortal."

"I'll forgive you your appetite, and



Fourth Talk

that is no small concession. It is so plebeian to appear actually hungry! But why need you be so secretive?"

"Confidence," said the man, with an orotund manner, "is the royal road to failure."

"You probably mean, if you confide in women."

"Especially if you confide in women. It is likely to head off your singleness of purpose and it shares the knowledge of failure. In short, if you are ambitious, don't talk about it."

"That sounds like an epigram and an especially beastly one," objected the maid, frowning daintily above her wine-glass.

"As you are wontedly true to your sex, I did not expect you to appreciate it."

"Oh, I suppose it is worthy enough



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as an epigram, but I never give any of them a single glance."

"You are wise. If an epigram is worthy, one glance ought to tell the whole story. I imagine you don't like to face truths."

"I do not dislike epigrams because they are true. It is because they are so worthy, so unavoidable, so dictatorial!"

"Still, as counter-topics, they have their uses," chuckled the man.

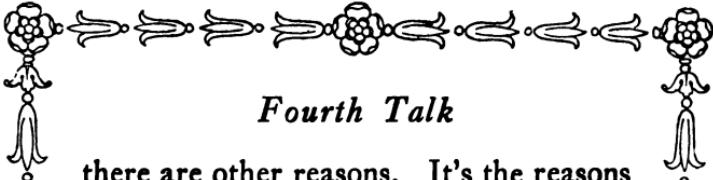
"Oh, I have not forgotten my question. We are sauntering towards it. It is not dignified to be precipitate."

"But isn't it—ah—strenuous to be so persistent?"

"One cannot avoid noticing questions that keep coming."

"May I infer that I am noticed, and a question because I keep coming?"

"No," she said tentatively. "I hope



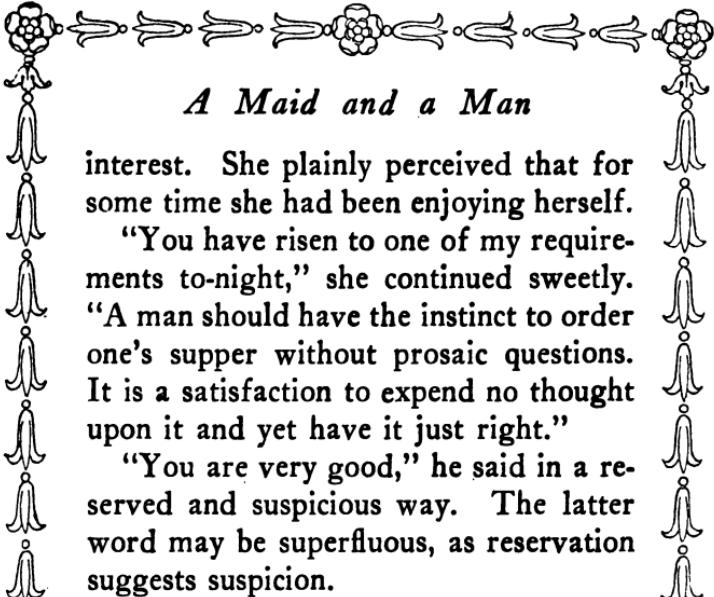
Fourth Talk

there are other reasons. It's the reasons I am searching for," she added, soothed by this discovery of an excuse for her curiosity. "You see, your constant cane first twirled the question mark, you wear clothes to match and you seem professionally of the world."

Inwardly she congratulated herself upon knowing just where to stop.

She had asked him whether he drank because of her constant wish to class him. In connection with this habit, she had noticed the three methods employed by men of the world, boasting about it, lying about it and ignoring it. The first struck her as too small, the second as too obvious, the last as sufficiently admirable to exasperate.

Doubling the emptied hands of her gloves back into their wrists, she put both elbows on the table in a posture of



A Maid and a Man

interest. She plainly perceived that for some time she had been enjoying herself.

"You have risen to one of my requirements to-night," she continued sweetly. "A man should have the instinct to order one's supper without prosaic questions. It is a satisfaction to expend no thought upon it and yet have it just right."

"You are very good," he said in a reserved and suspicious way. The latter word may be superfluous, as reservation suggests suspicion.

"I will dispense with any hackneyed recompense and ask instead that you be frank."

"It is a trick of your sex to lay upon a fellow the harder obligation and then demand that he be grateful," he evaded.

"Aren't you insulting my intelligence? Is gratitude a thing to be expected?" she said in a long-suffering way. Then, with



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an upward glance just lengthy enough to suggest how effective it might have been if lengthier, she wheedled, "No, but tell me, do you, now?"

From that one short glance, however, she suspected something even more cumbersome than frankness in preparation.

"Did you ever stop to moralize about oysters?" he essayed. "As long as they keep tight shut except to intake the necessary nourishment, they can grow large and juicy and perhaps accumulate pearls inside of themselves. If they continue tight, they finally fade away from rich old age, and folks are able to appreciate from the treasure in the shell what the life of an oyster ought to be. But if they allow themselves to be cracked open, they are gobbled up and done for."

"Isn't that rather deep?" asked the



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maid. "You should have given me time to prepare."

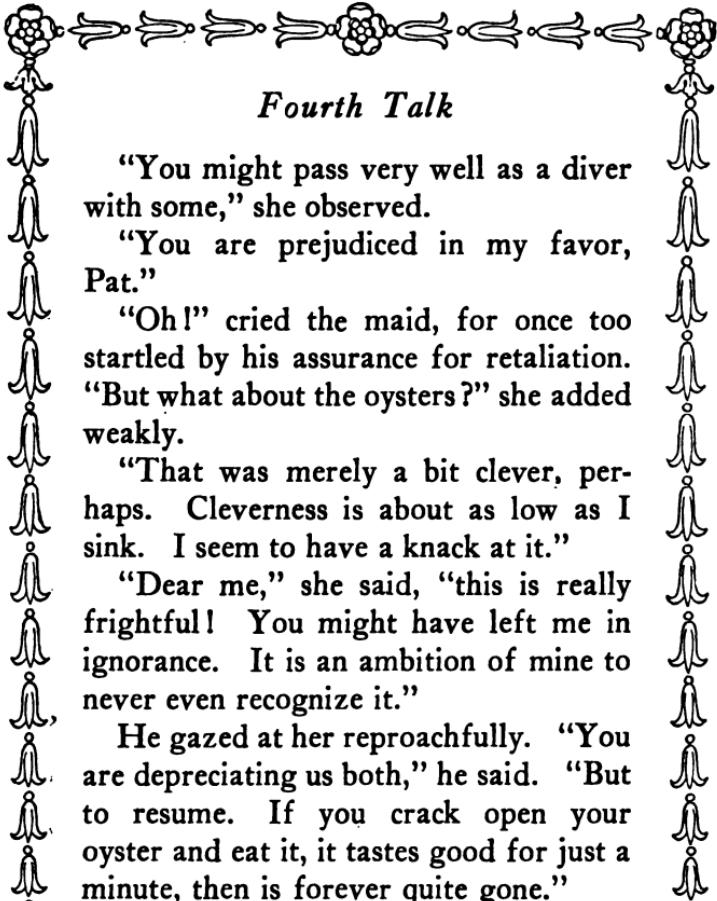
"You do not need to go deep. I'll do the diving and cracking for you."

"You are so competent," she murmured gently. "But do not go too far. It seems so much safer in the shallows."

"Don't be alarmed. I shall not go beyond my depths; and even if I did, I fancy you could produce a life-preserver."

"It is so nice to have a mission. I am to sit on the shore, ready to save you if you flounder?"

"Seriously, though, I am never deep," he said, making the unique confession with a full appreciation of its value. Remembering the confidence in her he had felt when she deprecated her singing, he felt sure that he must be scoring.



Fourth Talk

"You might pass very well as a diver with some," she observed.

"You are prejudiced in my favor, Pat."

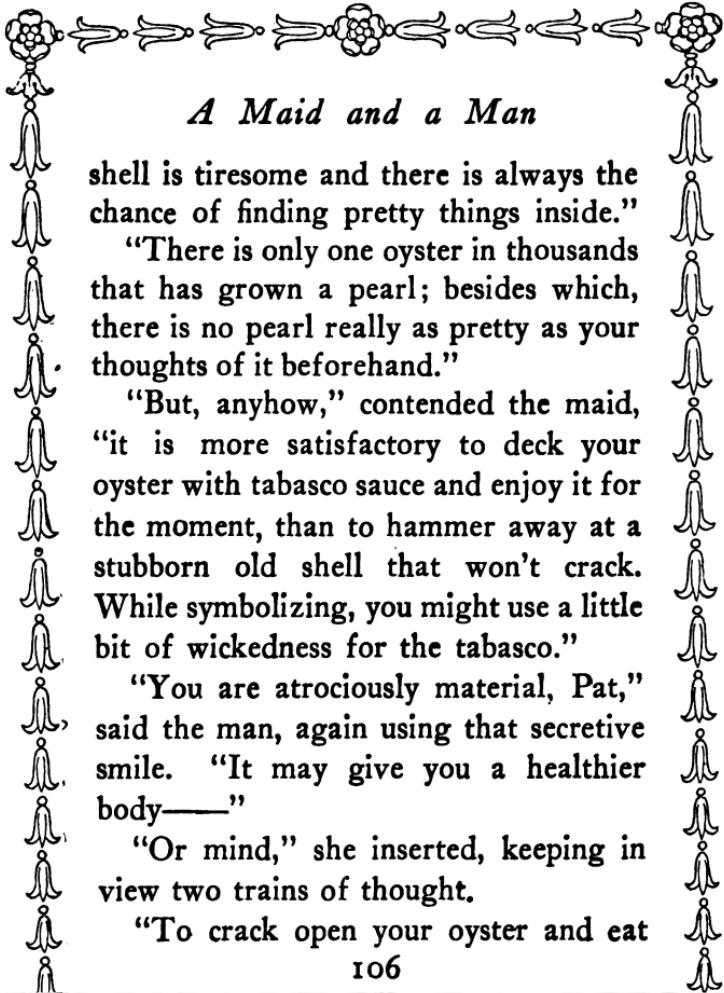
"Oh!" cried the maid, for once too startled by his assurance for retaliation. "But what about the oysters?" she added weakly.

"That was merely a bit clever, perhaps. Cleverness is about as low as I sink. I seem to have a knack at it."

"Dear me," she said, "this is really frightful! You might have left me in ignorance. It is an ambition of mine to never even recognize it."

He gazed at her reproachfully. "You are depreciating us both," he said. "But to resume. If you crack open your oyster and eat it, it tastes good for just a minute, then is forever quite gone."

"But contemplating the ugly outside



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shell is tiresome and there is always the chance of finding pretty things inside."

"There is only one oyster in thousands that has grown a pearl; besides which, there is no pearl really as pretty as your thoughts of it beforehand."

"But, anyhow," contended the maid, "it is more satisfactory to deck your oyster with tabasco sauce and enjoy it for the moment, than to hammer away at a stubborn old shell that won't crack. While symbolizing, you might use a little bit of wickedness for the tabasco."

"You are atrociously material, Pat," said the man, again using that secretive smile. "It may give you a healthier body—"

"Or mind," she inserted, keeping in view two trains of thought.

"To crack open your oyster and eat



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it," he continued, "but I think it is the interesting one that stays shut on ice. One can then imagine the pearls."

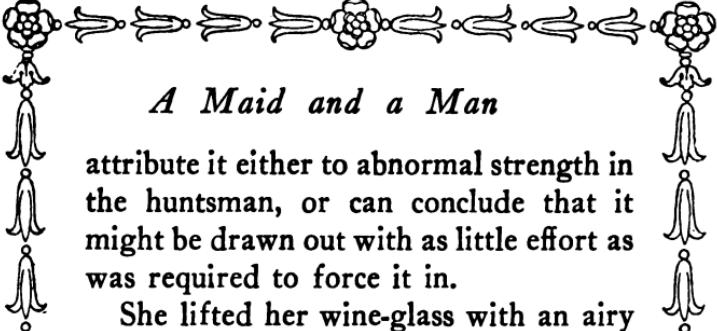
"And I think," said the maid disdainfully, "that if an oyster has a pearl, it is very stupid of it to not open up. Do you know," she added, gazing at him blandly, "*there is another man?*"

She continued to watch him curiously. When one flies an arrow, there is more of triumph than merely seeing it hit the mark. One likes to measure how deep into the target it has sunk.

"I asked you before, you remember," he said quietly, but seeming to bend beneath a weight, presently adding, as though scornful of subterfuges, "You have been unreasonably cruel."

The maid was puzzled and inclined to disappointment.

If the arrow does sink deep, one can



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attribute it either to abnormal strength in the huntsman, or can conclude that it might be drawn out with as little effort as was required to force it in.

She lifted her wine-glass with an airy significance. "Perhaps I am growing confidential."

"No, no," he said gravely, "I could not accuse you of that."

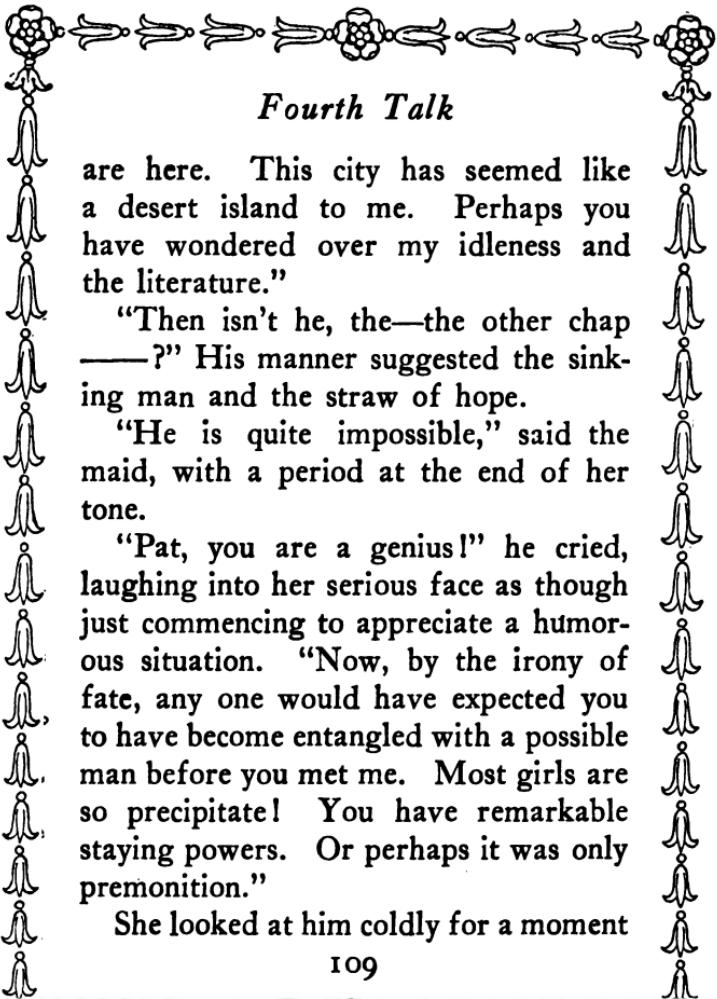
"You see, my friend," she added, with less flippancy, "you tapped at an oyster."

"And in showing me the worth of your argument, you have proven to me how desirable mine is."

"You are contradicting yourself."

"Yes, I know, but it is more comfortable to blame you and wonder, than to admire your frankness—and know. It is harrowing to know things. Don't expect me to love that other chap!"

"But it is because of him that we



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are here. This city has seemed like a desert island to me. Perhaps you have wondered over my idleness and the literature."

"Then isn't he, the—the other chap —?" His manner suggested the sinking man and the straw of hope.

"He is quite impossible," said the maid, with a period at the end of her tone.

"Pat, you are a genius!" he cried, laughing into her serious face as though just commencing to appreciate a humorous situation. "Now, by the irony of fate, any one would have expected you to have become entangled with a possible man before you met me. Most girls are so precipitate! You have remarkable staying powers. Or perhaps it was only premonition."

She looked at him coldly for a moment



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or so, but it evidently did not occur to him to be abashed.

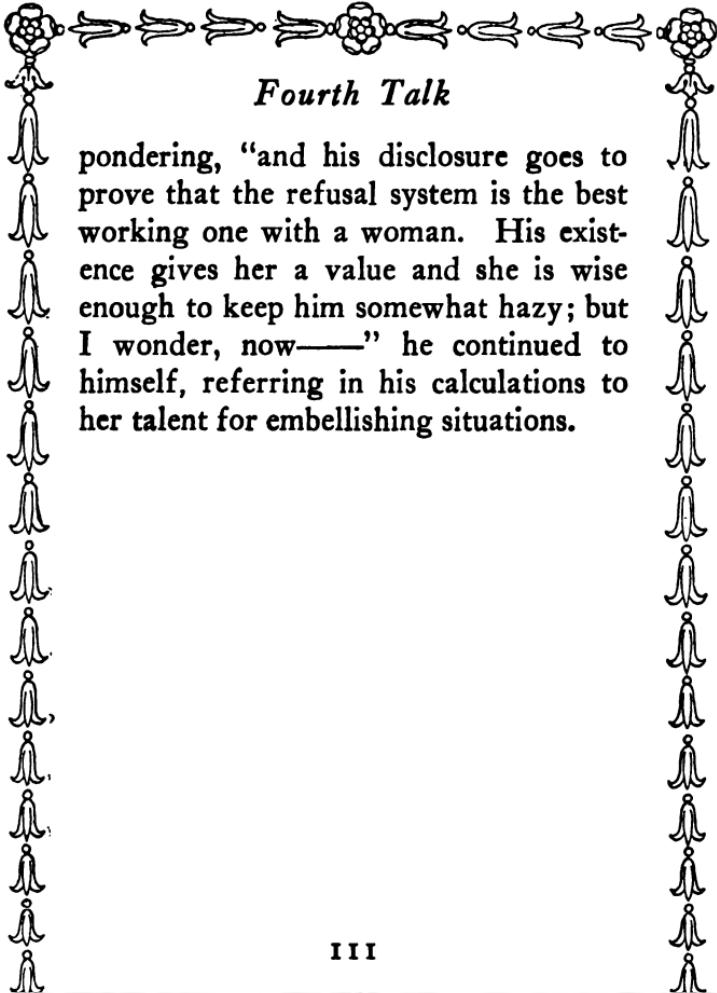
"And, speaking of oysters——" she said after a while, not disdaining this very meager comfort.

"About the oysters you are right, quite right," he conceded generously. "It is much better to open them at once. In answer to your question about the mead that cheers, Pat, why, I don't in the sense you ask it; but, of course, occasionally——"

He looked at once sly, apologetic and non-committal. She could not possibly decide, after all, whether his method was first, second or last.

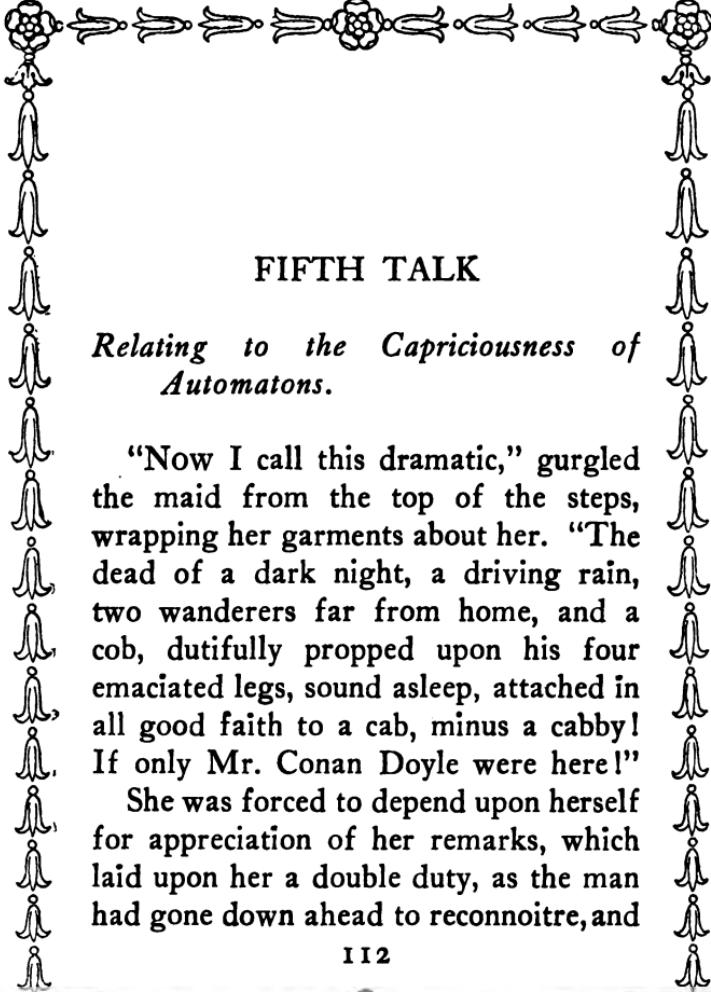
The doubt annoyed her, but she would have gained substantial grains of comfort from his thoughts.

"The entrance of this other man is an explanation and a background," he was



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pondering, "and his disclosure goes to prove that the refusal system is the best working one with a woman. His existence gives her a value and she is wise enough to keep him somewhat hazy; but I wonder, now—" he continued to himself, referring in his calculations to her talent for embellishing situations.



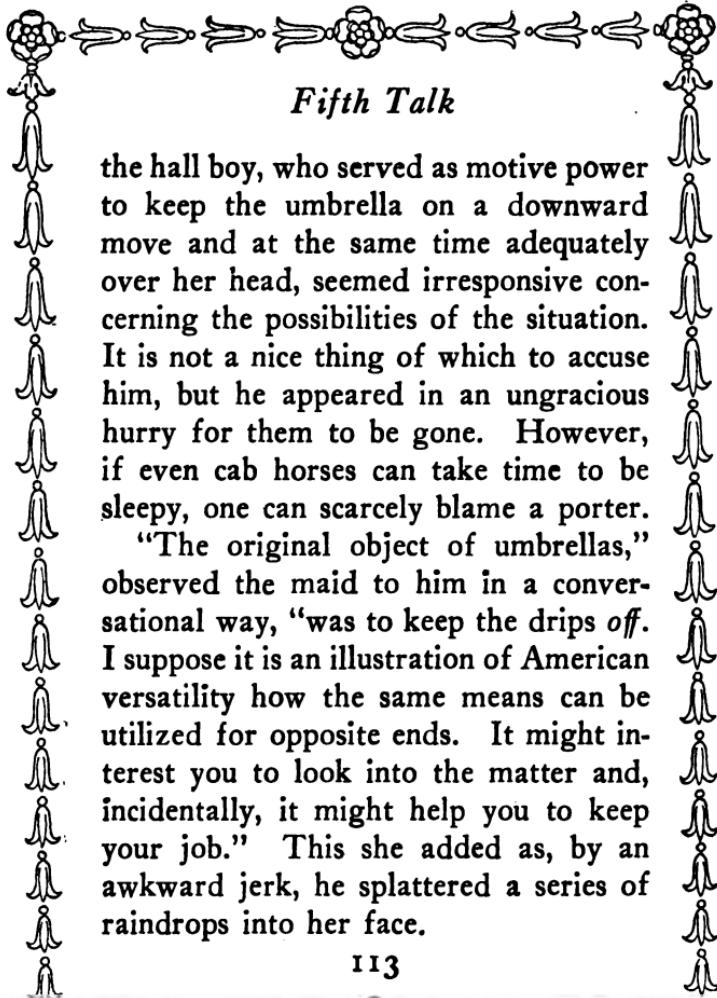
FIFTH TALK

Relating to the Capriciousness of Automatons.

"Now I call this dramatic," gurgled the maid from the top of the steps, wrapping her garments about her. "The dead of a dark night, a driving rain, two wanderers far from home, and a cob, dutifully propped upon his four emaciated legs, sound asleep, attached in all good faith to a cab, minus a cabby! If only Mr. Conan Doyle were here!"

She was forced to depend upon herself for appreciation of her remarks, which laid upon her a double duty, as the man had gone down ahead to reconnoitre, and

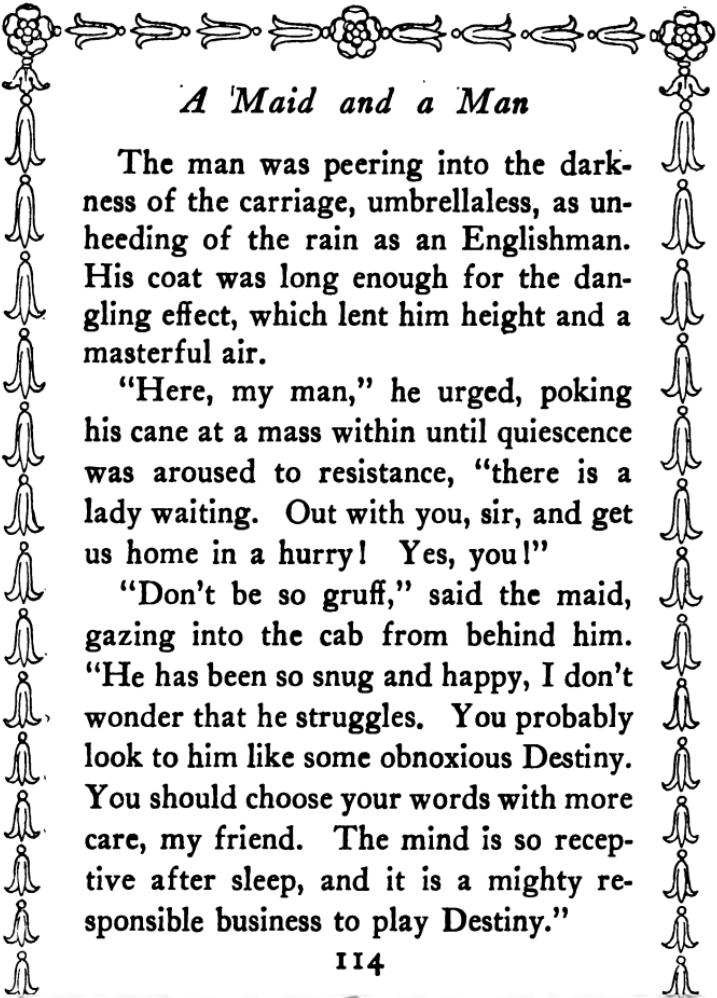




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the hall boy, who served as motive power to keep the umbrella on a downward move and at the same time adequately over her head, seemed irresponsible concerning the possibilities of the situation. It is not a nice thing of which to accuse him, but he appeared in an ungracious hurry for them to be gone. However, if even cab horses can take time to be sleepy, one can scarcely blame a porter.

"The original object of umbrellas," observed the maid to him in a conversational way, "was to keep the drips off. I suppose it is an illustration of American versatility how the same means can be utilized for opposite ends. It might interest you to look into the matter and, incidentally, it might help you to keep your job." This she added as, by an awkward jerk, he splattered a series of raindrops into her face.

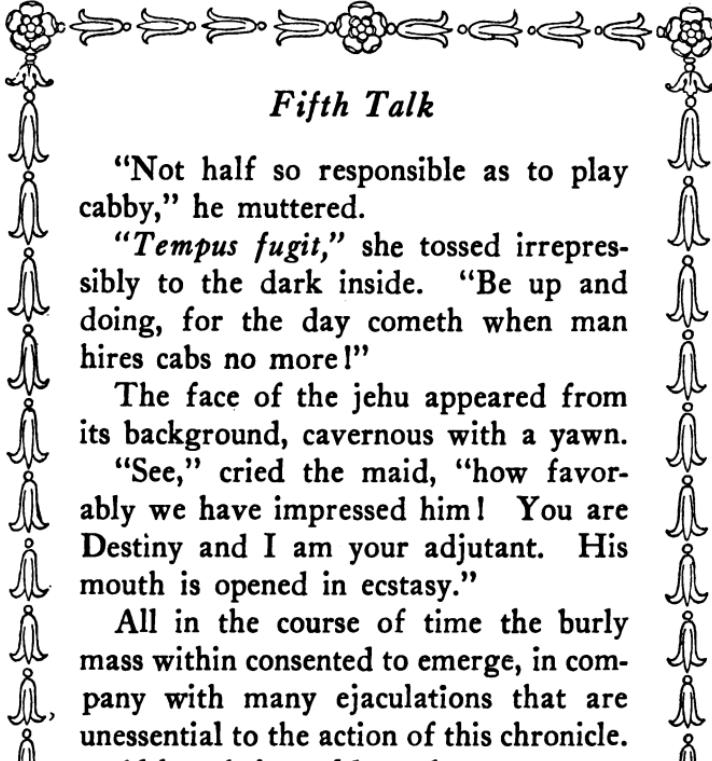


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The man was peering into the darkness of the carriage, umbrellaless, as unheeding of the rain as an Englishman. His coat was long enough for the dangling effect, which lent him height and a masterful air.

"Here, my man," he urged, poking his cane at a mass within until quiescence was aroused to resistance, "there is a lady waiting. Out with you, sir, and get us home in a hurry! Yes, you!"

"Don't be so gruff," said the maid, gazing into the cab from behind him. "He has been so snug and happy, I don't wonder that he struggles. You probably look to him like some obnoxious Destiny. You should choose your words with more care, my friend. The mind is so receptive after sleep, and it is a mighty responsible business to play Destiny."



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"Not half so responsible as to play cabby," he muttered.

"*Tempus fugit*," she tossed irresponsibly to the dark inside. "Be up and doing, for the day cometh when man hires cabs no more!"

The face of the jehu appeared from its background, cavernous with a yawn.

"See," cried the maid, "how favorably we have impressed him! You are Destiny and I am your adjutant. His mouth is opened in ecstasy."

All in the course of time the burly mass within consented to emerge, in company with many ejaculations that are unessential to the action of this chronicle.

Although it could not be seen, something else emerged which caused the man to shake the cabby roughly by the shoulder and frown into his face.

"Are you all right, fellow?" he



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inquired, doubling his dose of shakes.
“Brace up!”

“Poor man,” cooed the maid from the far corner of the carriage. “Perhaps we’d better send for some spirits of ammonia.”

“Or a policeman,” suggested the man, now in something of a temper.

The cabby shambled for a moment and blinked about stupidly at this particular section of the world. Suddenly he straightened.

“Address, sir?” he demanded in a competent way.

“Now we are going to have a practical demonstration of what habit will accomplish,” said the man, as he slammed the carriage door on the night. The wheels began to grumble at the gravelly street and they were off. “I am awfully sorry.”



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"You are selfish to regret sharing a lark," she interrupted genially.

"I see you can play trump in a game of adversity. It is nice of you, Pat."

"Not trump, only a higher suit card. I like to play at suiting. It is not difficult to take the trick when you play against ill-humor."

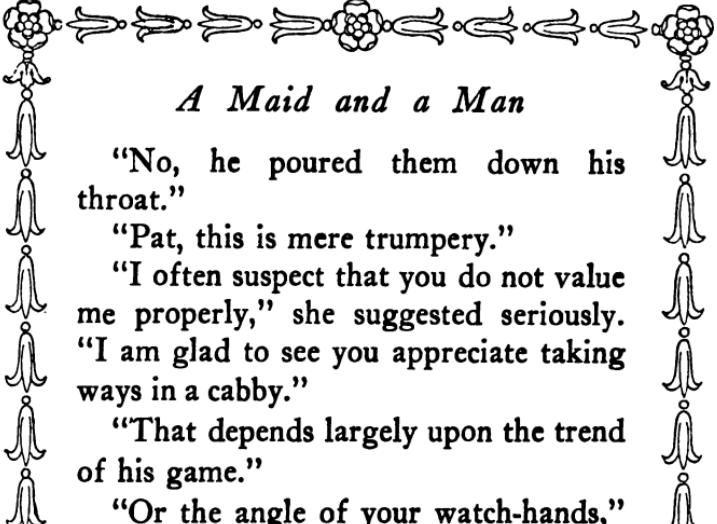
"Now you are playing the Queen."

"Which is always one better than the Jack."

"You manage to be taking, Pat, with merely your deuces," he said, smiling towards her in the way he had that can only be described as "sweet." "I trust His Cabbylets will be equally so."

"Have hope, for he seems quite competent to raise the—ah—two spots, you know."

"Must have tucked 'em up his sleeve."



A Maid and a Man

"No, he poured them down his throat."

"Pat, this is mere trumpery."

"I often suspect that you do not value me properly," she suggested seriously.
"I am glad to see you appreciate taking ways in a cabby."

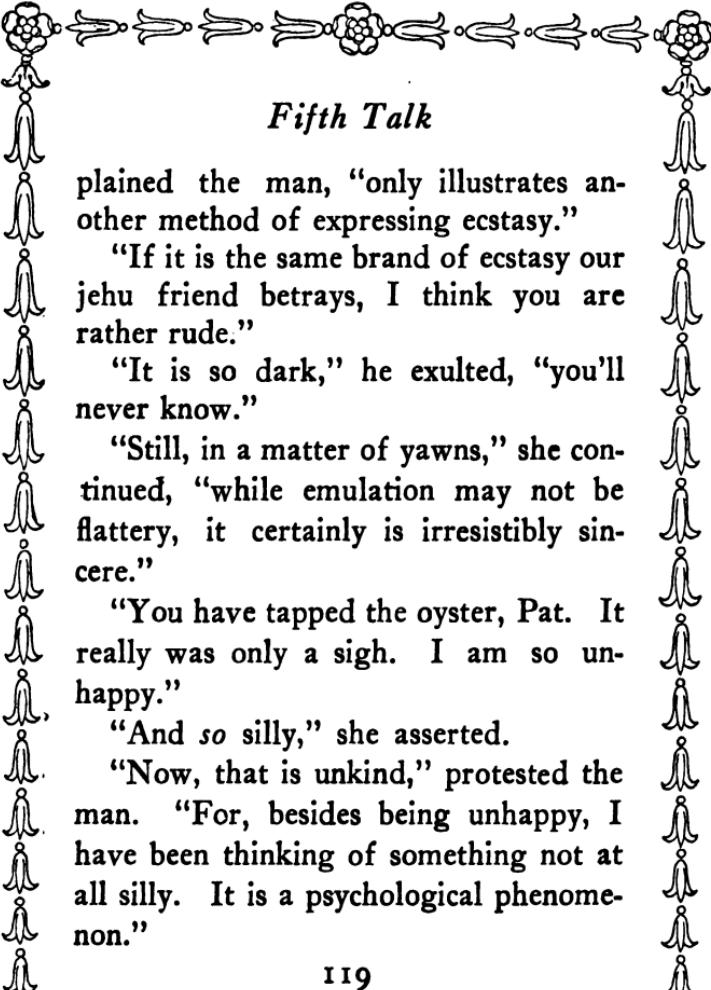
"That depends largely upon the trend of his game."

"Or the angle of your watch-hands," she suggested.

"Or the somebody cuddled up in the other corner." The man settled back upon the cushions with something like a sigh.

"I am not apt at these gusts of emotion," said the maid. "All sighs sound alike to me, the sigh of resignation, of despair——"

"That last exhalation of mine," ex-



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plained the man, "only illustrates another method of expressing ecstasy."

"If it is the same brand of ecstasy our jehu friend betrays, I think you are rather rude."

"It is so dark," he exulted, "you'll never know."

"Still, in a matter of yawns," she continued, "while emulation may not be flattery, it certainly is irresistibly sincere."

"You have tapped the oyster, Pat. It really was only a sigh. I am so unhappy."

"And *so* silly," she asserted.

"Now, that is unkind," protested the man. "For, besides being unhappy, I have been thinking of something not at all silly. It is a psychological phenomenon."



A Maid and a Man

"Oh, one of those," she murmured with a perceptible shudder.

"Yes," he asserted triumphantly. "You see, that cabby up there did not expend one thought upon the mental tabulation of the address I gave him. If there is any grey matter in his cranium, he has it stored safely out of reach to-night."

"And I deem that very wise of him," she interrupted. "Grey matter is such a luxury that one ought to hoard it."

"Don't you think folks as a rule appear sufficiently frugal with it? But our cabby, you know, will drive straight to the place without giving it a thought, simply from the habit of doing what he is told."

"That cabby," she protested, "will either have to think, or we won't get home to-night."



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"But he can't, Pat. It is physically, and hence mentally, impossible."

"Spirituously impossible, you mean."

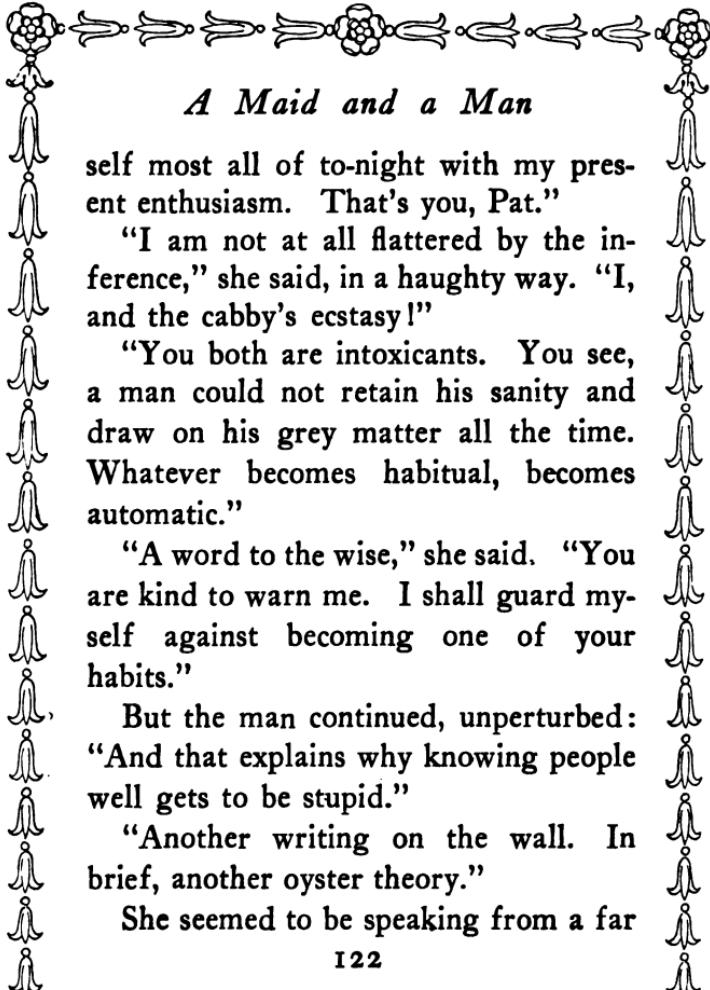
"You are persistently frivolous. To proceed, however. We are all creatures largely of automatic action. It is a pet theory of mine."

"Like most pets, it seems to me rather useless. Just so things get done, what does it matter how?"

"If we were not," the man continued stolidly, "how ever could we find time for our enthusiasms? Jehu must have his—ah—"

"Moments for ecstasy," she supplied.

"I was about to say, his ecstasy for moments, which amounts to the same thing. I shall manage to run out the sheet to-morrow and do it well, because I am in the habit of it, unhampered by the fact that I have been indulging my-



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self most all of to-night with my present enthusiasm. That's you, Pat."

"I am not at all flattered by the inference," she said, in a haughty way. "I, and the cabby's ecstasy!"

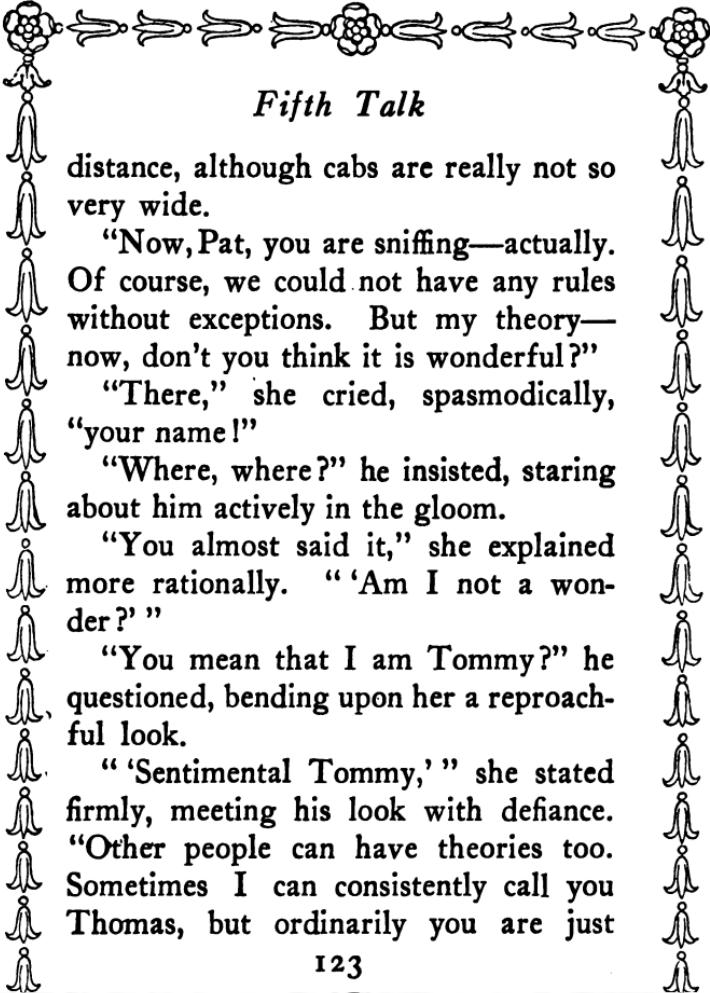
"You both are intoxicants. You see, a man could not retain his sanity and draw on his grey matter all the time. Whatever becomes habitual, becomes automatic."

"A word to the wise," she said. "You are kind to warn me. I shall guard myself against becoming one of your habits."

But the man continued, unperturbed: "And that explains why knowing people well gets to be stupid."

"Another writing on the wall. In brief, another oyster theory."

She seemed to be speaking from a far



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distance, although cabs are really not so very wide.

"Now, Pat, you are sniffing—actually. Of course, we could not have any rules without exceptions. But my theory—now, don't you think it is wonderful?"

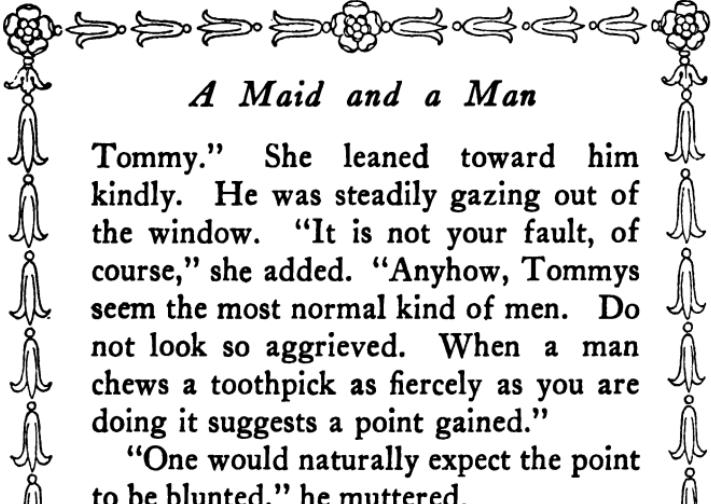
"There," she cried, spasmodically, "your name!"

"Where, where?" he insisted, staring about him actively in the gloom.

"You almost said it," she explained more rationally. "'Am I not a wonder?'"

"You mean that I am Tommy?" he questioned, bending upon her a reproachful look.

"'Sentimental Tommy,'" she stated firmly, meeting his look with defiance. "Other people can have theories too. Sometimes I can consistently call you Thomas, but ordinarily you are just



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Tommy." She leaned toward him kindly. He was steadily gazing out of the window. "It is not your fault, of course," she added. "Anyhow, Tommys seem the most normal kind of men. Do not look so aggrieved. When a man chews a toothpick as fiercely as you are doing it suggests a point gained."

"One would naturally expect the point to be blunted," he muttered.

"Don't be peevish yet, Tommy, for there is worse coming. I wish you would throw it away. It is one of the two most irritating things about you, the toothpick habit and the crooked hat habit. Do you know, my ideal man must wear his hat square upon the top of his head. You often look a bit rakish."

"Evidently your ideal man must have a nice, smooth bullet-head like a clothing-store dummy. We ordinary fellows,



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who have thought a few things, have to accommodate our hats to our bumps of development," he said with labored sarcasm.

"I should think the hat-makers would fashion models for 'the brains of the country!'"

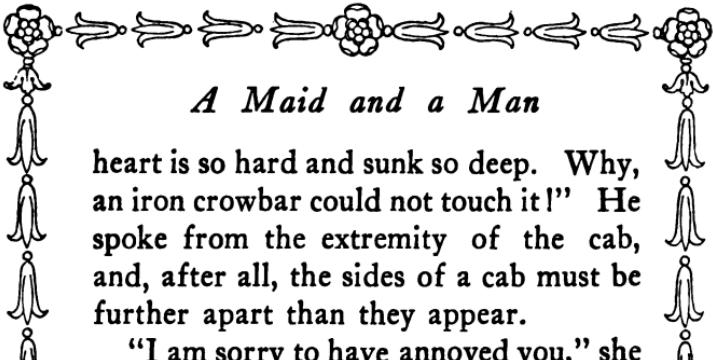
"It would be a losing business, the demand would be so slight."

"Oh, that's so; there are only a few of you, aren't there, Tommy?"

"Vixen!" he said, spoiling his attempted fierceness with a smile.

"That wasn't much of a hiss. Don't try to be viperish, for the gender of viper is said to be feminine. And do throw away your toothpick. It stabs me to the heart."

"Really, now, I know you are only playing with me. The brand I use has neither the length nor the strength, your



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heart is so hard and sunk so deep. Why, an iron crowbar could not touch it!" He spoke from the extremity of the cab, and, after all, the sides of a cab must be further apart than they appear.

"I am sorry to have annoyed you," she said, with a repentant air.

"You are not to blame for being frank, Lady, but one cannot help annoyance at appearing so vulgar."

As a rule, he could give blow for blow, but by the fluctuating lights thrown into the carriage she seemed quite immaculate. The coloring of her face within its fluffy hood was as fresh as a child's, and her expression matched in innocence. He stored his instinctive belligerent demand in so convenient a place, however, that he was reminded to strike later on. Men justify themselves for mental handcuffs with women, be-



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cause a spoken blow does not, of course, leave any visible mark.

"We can choose a nicer name than vulgariates," she soothed. "Rather let us call them idiocyncrasies."

"Did you treat the—the other chap like a child, Pat?"

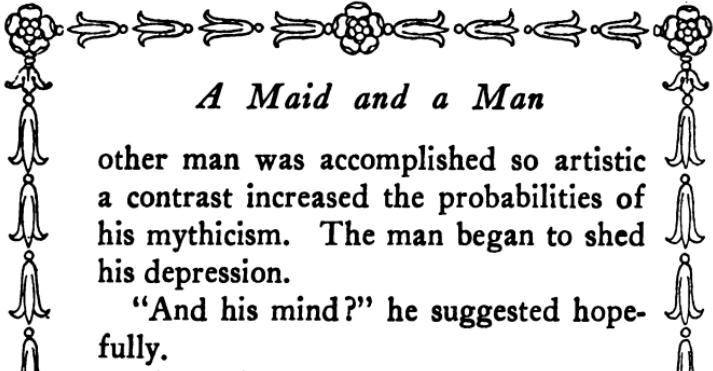
"The other man?" she said, in a voice that caressed his memory. "I could not do it—he bullied me."

"Brute!" he sneered. "Did the burly stunt, eh?"

"He was large—enormous," she continued, as though reveling in this look at even his memory, "dark, you know, and domineering."

"Of course, he was all that," said the man to himself. "Her first impulse would be to make him the opposite of me."

The fact that in the appearance of the



A Maid and a Man

other man was accomplished so artistic a contrast increased the probabilities of his mythicism. The man began to shed his depression.

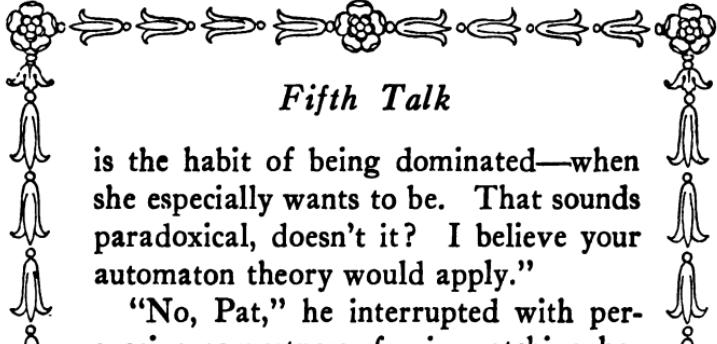
"And his mind?" he suggested hopefully.

"His mind was brisk in a way," she answered slowly, "but still— That was the trouble. I concluded he was not mental enough."

Now this seemed less mythical. The man, however, found a speedy counter-consolation.

"You did not love him, Pat," he asserted gravely. "Many superior women are bullied, but when a bullied woman once realizes her superiority the game is up."

"I am trying to think you are right," she said, "but the hardest habit in the world for a thinking woman to conquer

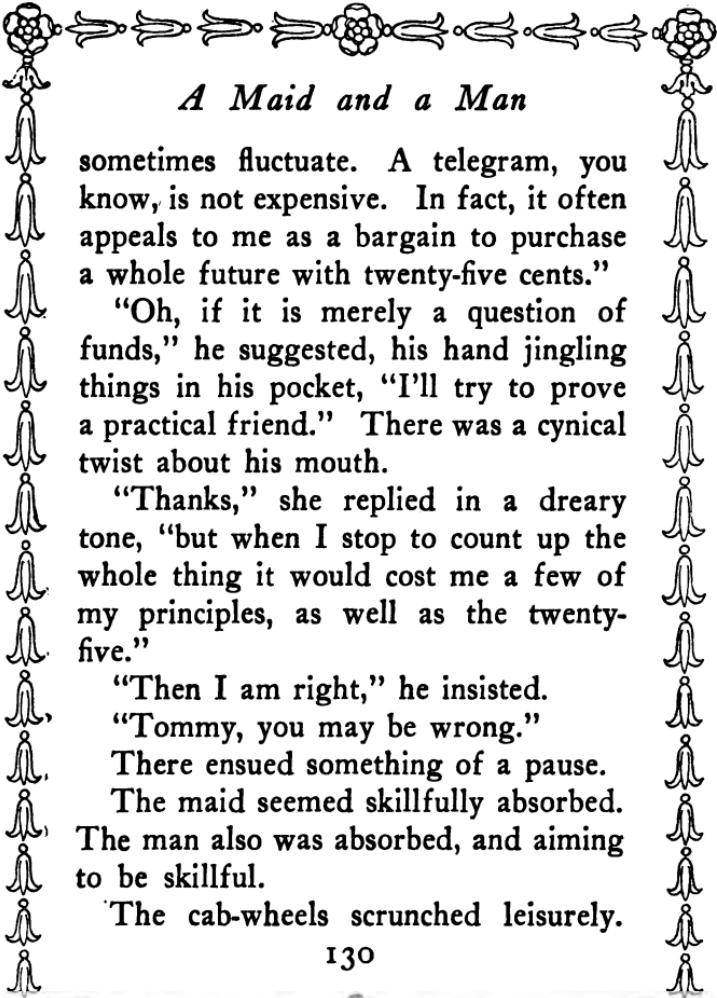


Fifth Talk

is the habit of being dominated—when she especially wants to be. That sounds paradoxical, doesn't it? I believe your automaton theory would apply."

"No, Pat," he interrupted with persuasive earnestness, for in watching her face he had seen a tension of muscles that are not wontedly moved by myths, unless one is consummate in deceit. "Love never becomes automatic until after marriage. It has to then, you know, for there is nothing to keep it enthused. Unless it were still in the enthusiastic state, how could people get through with the early idiocies and the ceremony? Love? You don't know what it is yet, Pat."

"It is good of you to be so sure, and so quickly, too," she murmured gratefully. "Even with my more intimate knowledge of this particular example, I



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sometimes fluctuate. A telegram, you know, is not expensive. In fact, it often appeals to me as a bargain to purchase a whole future with twenty-five cents."

"Oh, if it is merely a question of funds," he suggested, his hand jingling things in his pocket, "I'll try to prove a practical friend." There was a cynical twist about his mouth.

"Thanks," she replied in a dreary tone, "but when I stop to count up the whole thing it would cost me a few of my principles, as well as the twenty-five."

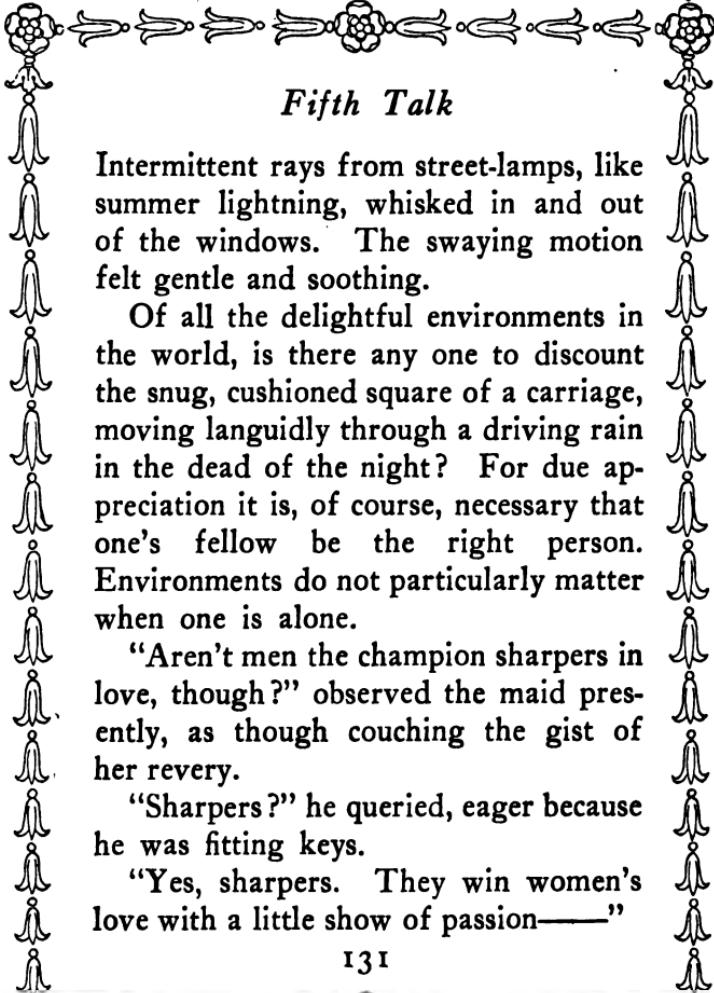
"Then I am right," he insisted.

"Tommy, you may be wrong."

There ensued something of a pause.

The maid seemed skillfully absorbed. The man also was absorbed, and aiming to be skillful.

The cab-wheels scrunched leisurely.



Fifth Talk

Intermittent rays from street-lamps, like summer lightning, whisked in and out of the windows. The swaying motion felt gentle and soothing.

Of all the delightful environments in the world, is there any one to discount the snug, cushioned square of a carriage, moving languidly through a driving rain in the dead of the night? For due appreciation it is, of course, necessary that one's fellow be the right person. Environments do not particularly matter when one is alone.

"Aren't men the champion sharpers in love, though?" observed the maid presently, as though couching the gist of her reverie.

"Sharpers?" he queried, eager because he was fitting keys.

"Yes, sharpers. They win women's love with a little show of passion——"



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"They are not all like that," he interrupted, in a distinctly reproachful tone, but she seemed not to be speaking particularly to him.

"They offer us a counterfeit coin, you see, and we are so stupid and young at the traffic that we exchange good money for it."

"But women are given instinct, you know," he inserted.

"Instinct!" she exclaimed, with a suppression of suggested bitterness. "We stamp upon our instincts and only discover our stupidity when we try to purchase a little endurance of happiness. Then we find that the coin is worthless and we cannot give it back. There is nothing much to be said, because we were so eager to close the bargain in the first place."

"It is too bad, Pat," he said softly,



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for she seemed deliberately to have handed him the key that fitted. He leaned very near to her, with a display of feeling that seemed to him consistent with the appearances, if not the actualities, of the situation. "It is hard for the rest of us that there are cads in the world—it gives us all stripes. But they are not all like that. I'll show you that there are different men."

In this nearness he fancied a subtle allurement. He laid his hand against her throat, just above its disappearance within the black collar, and it clung there for a moment, vibrant as though touching a magnet.

Naturally, the maid could not know for how long he had contemplated this action, and to her it appeared quite too spontaneous. She shrank from his odd caress.



A Maid and a Man

"And all this melodrama because you happened to order blue-points for my supper," she laughed.

The man drew back as though flicked in the face with a glove.

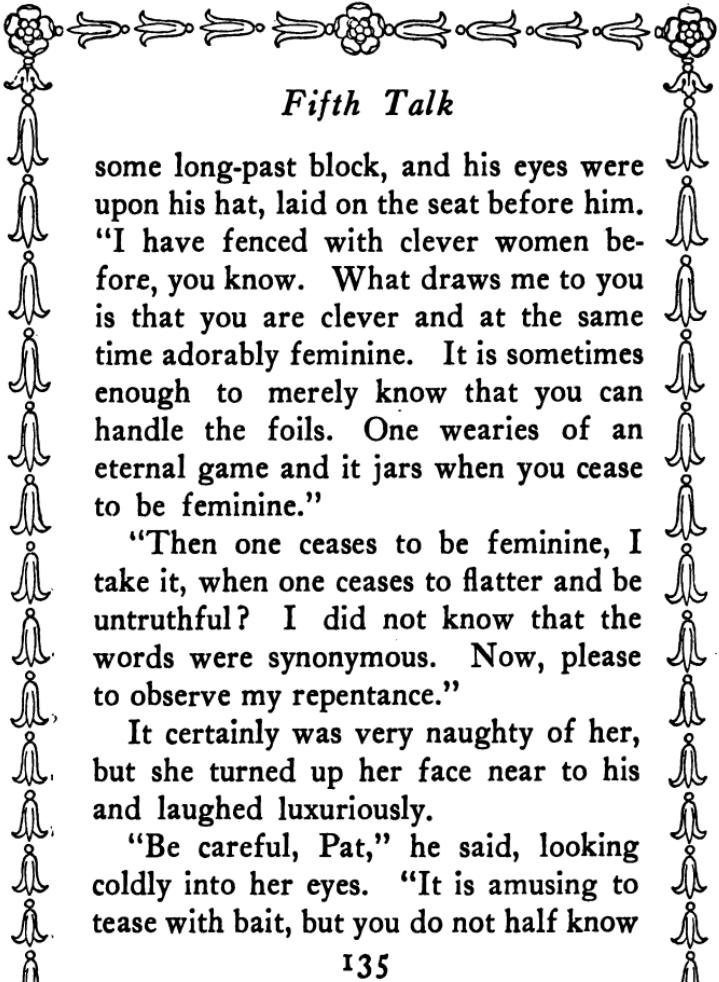
"You love to be dangerous, don't you?" he asked.

"Never mind, you have yet to learn a man who has absolute control of himself."

"That is true," she observed, but for a while her eyes were opened wide in the shadow, focused hard upon him, as though taking a time-exposure of some curiosity.

With a shrug he drew further away.

"I can't help it, but sometimes you jar upon me," he said with a delicate aversion of manner, perhaps largely donned because his thoughts were with his toothpick, lying lonely on the roadway of



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some long-past block, and his eyes were upon his hat, laid on the seat before him. "I have fenced with clever women before, you know. What draws me to you is that you are clever and at the same time adorably feminine. It is sometimes enough to merely know that you can handle the foils. One wearis of an eternal game and it jars when you cease to be feminine."

"Then one ceases to be feminine, I take it, when one ceases to flatter and be untruthful? I did not know that the words were synonymous. Now, please to observe my repentance."

It certainly was very naughty of her, but she turned up her face near to his and laughed luxuriously.

"Be careful, Pat," he said, looking coldly into her eyes. "It is amusing to tease with bait, but you do not half know



A Maid and a Man

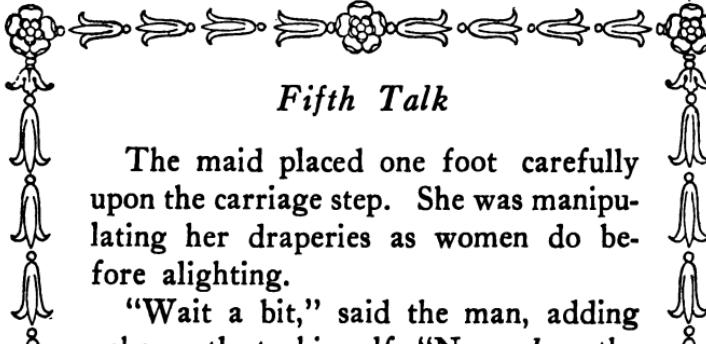
your power. If you employed the methods of other women——”

“Perhaps I have methods of my own,” she interrupted, touched into sudden seriousness by his forbearance. “If you stop to consider, it seems very probable that I have, and I give you warning. Beware of me!”

With a noisy crunching, the vehicle subsided into a dead stop.

“I guess the curtain is rung for to-night,” said the man, waiting for the door to open, “and very opportunely, too. ‘With these fateful words!’ ”

As the door showed no inclination to afford a voluntary avenue of exit, he took it and the situation by the handle and hopped out upon the street. A puddle received him, and mud rose eagerly about his ankles. He gazed stupidly around at an unfamiliar scene.



Fifth Talk

The maid placed one foot carefully upon the carriage step. She was manipulating her draperies as women do before alighting.

"Wait a bit," said the man, adding vehemently to himself, "Now, *darn* the luck!"

He looked so very doleful out in the rain that the maid, by imagining, seeing and hearing, began to grasp the situation.

They were halted in the centre of a narrow street, whose lax bricks were easily depressed into the squashy earth. On either hand decrepit houses crouched under the rain, and a lonesome street-lamp, the one thing awake, stood hissing at the drops. The horse seemed lost in somnolence, or dreary meditations. His head hung almost to the ground and the reins trailed behind him



A Maid and a Man

in the mud. He looked in sad need of a tonic.

The cabby was happily impervious to all discomforts. He had been lurched toward a precarious angle in the seat and was leering dully in his dipsomaniac fancies.

The man and the maid gazed at the soggy scene, then exchanged one long, solicitous look. The maid laughed.

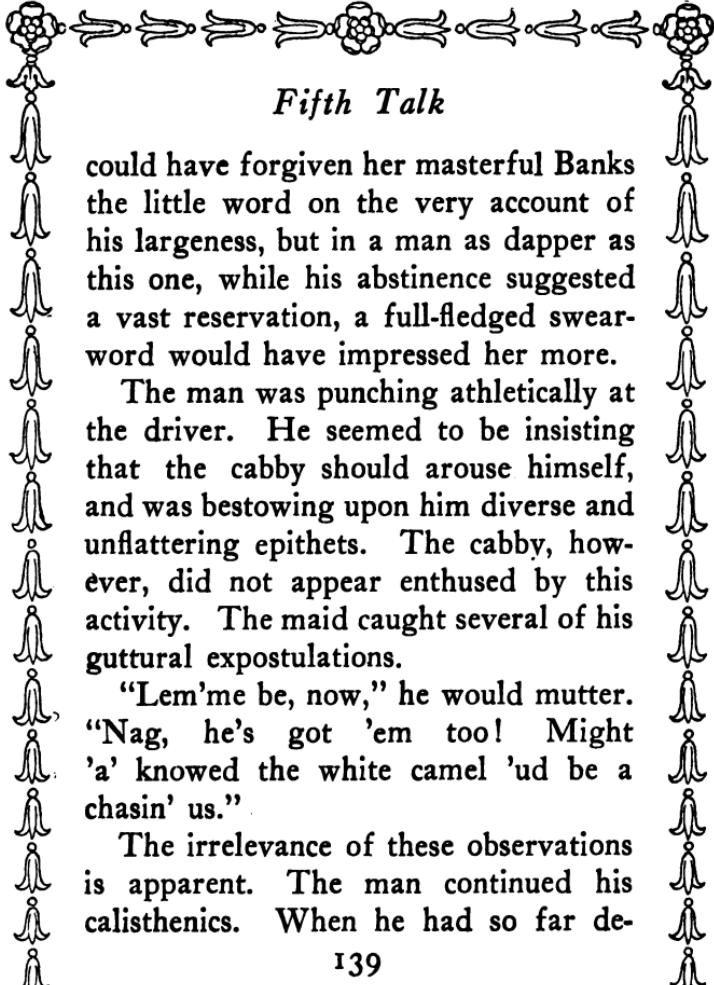
"Do you know where we are?" he asked.

"I always leave such details to my escort," she answered pertly.

"Well, *darn* it all!"

This expression was a fragment that she caught from the monologue of the man.

The maid quite agreed with his sentiment, though the situation seemed to warrant a more heroic expression. She



Fifth Talk

could have forgiven her masterful Banks the little word on the very account of his largeness, but in a man as dapper as this one, while his abstinence suggested a vast reservation, a full-fledged swear-word would have impressed her more.

The man was punching athletically at the driver. He seemed to be insisting that the cabby should arouse himself, and was bestowing upon him diverse and unflattering epithets. The cabby, however, did not appear enthused by this activity. The maid caught several of his guttural expostulations.

"Lem'me be, now," he would mutter. "Nag, he's got 'em too! Might 'a' knowed the white camel 'ud be a chasin' us."

The irrelevance of these observations is apparent. The man continued his calisthenics. When he had so far de-



A Maid and a Man

spared as to be nicely tempered for the surprise, the driver stiffened himself with a vast assumption of competence and dignity.

"Address, sir?" he demanded, and bent over the dash-board in a rash attempt to recover the reins.

The man handed them to him in company with elaborate instructions, then climbed in and glued his face to the window.

The maid observed from over his shoulder.

In the distance was a vacuum of blackness, except where spots of light seemed draped on an invisible string. Just below these, at certain intervals of inches, miniature nodding cars, each within its halo of electric gleam, crawled across the pane.

She judged they were facing a dis-



Fifth Talk

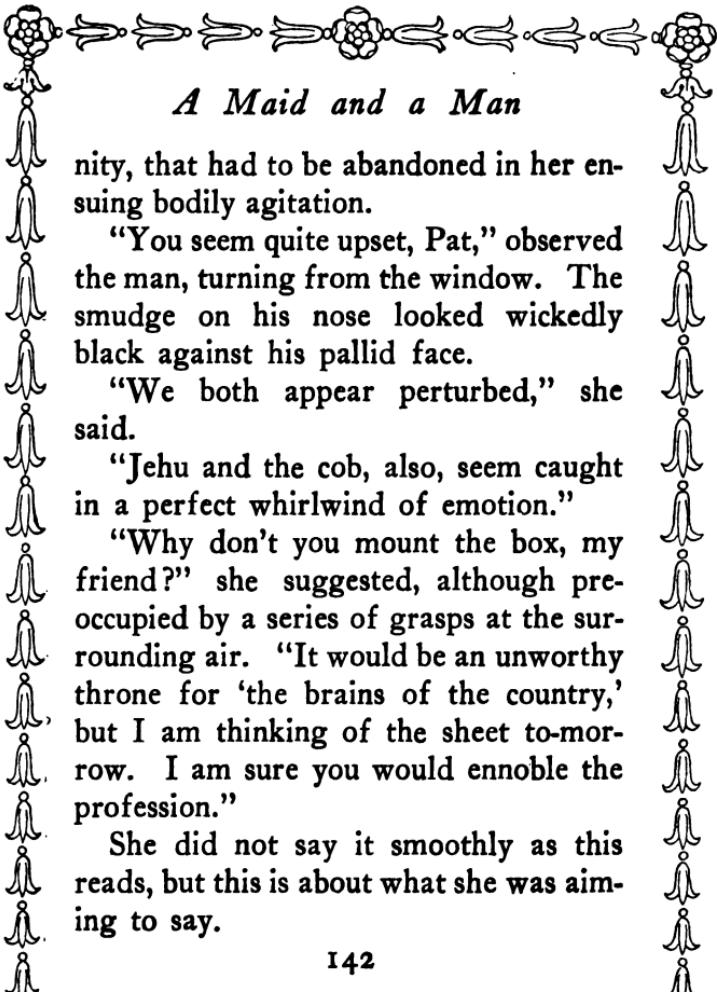
tant suburban hill, and that, in more senses than one, they were in somewhat of a hole.

The rapidity of the cars seemed to slacken, as the cab started in the opposite direction. All the world began to undulate capriciously.

"It seems like a storm at sea," murmured the maid, as she smoothed herself from an abrupt encounter with the side of the carriage, only to find herself resting unceremoniously against the man's wet shoulder.

Above the rattle, they could hear the cabby lashing all dejection from his raw-boned steed.

"It really doesn't make any difference about the hour or the place, or the horse or things, so that you have the right person cuddled in the other corner," gasped the maid, with a desperate clutch at dig-



A Maid and a Man

nity, that had to be abandoned in her ensuing bodily agitation.

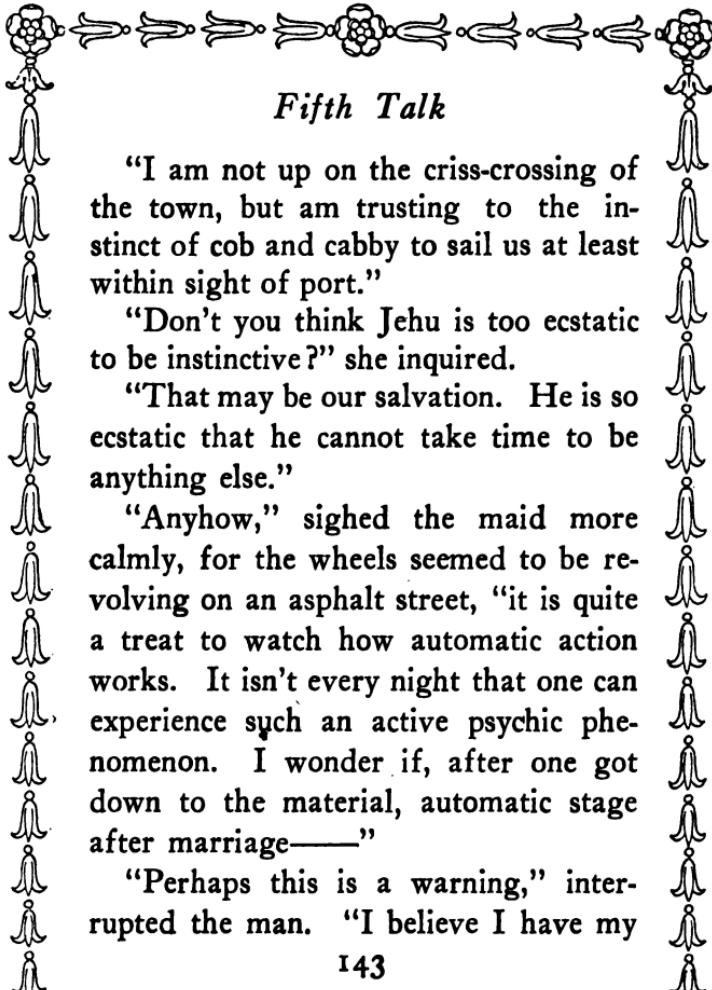
"You seem quite upset, Pat," observed the man, turning from the window. The smudge on his nose looked wickedly black against his pallid face.

"We both appear perturbed," she said.

"Jehu and the cob, also, seem caught in a perfect whirlwind of emotion."

"Why don't you mount the box, my friend?" she suggested, although preoccupied by a series of grasps at the surrounding air. "It would be an unworthy throne for 'the brains of the country,' but I am thinking of the sheet to-morrow. I am sure you would ennoble the profession."

She did not say it smoothly as this reads, but this is about what she was aiming to say.



Fifth Talk

"I am not up on the criss-crossing of the town, but am trusting to the instinct of cob and cabby to sail us at least within sight of port."

"Don't you think Jehu is too ecstatic to be instinctive?" she inquired.

"That may be our salvation. He is so ecstatic that he cannot take time to be anything else."

"Anyhow," sighed the maid more calmly, for the wheels seemed to be revolving on an asphalt street, "it is quite a treat to watch how automatic action works. It isn't every night that one can experience such an active psychic phenomenon. I wonder if, after one got down to the material, automatic stage after marriage——"

"Perhaps this is a warning," interrupted the man. "I believe I have my



A Maid and a Man

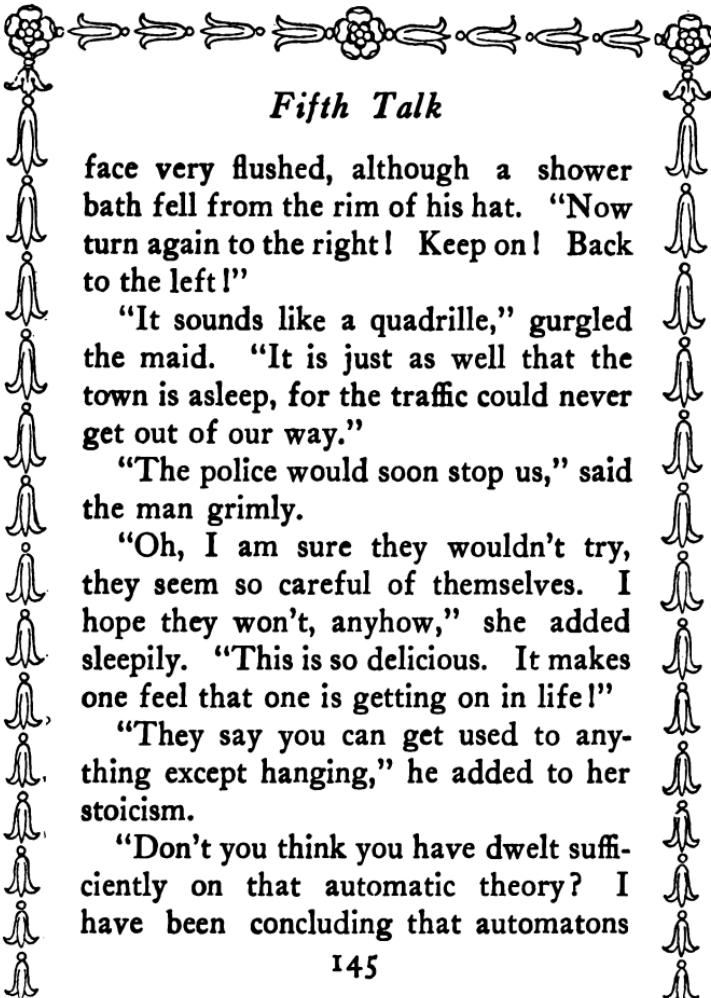
bearings now," he added, opening the carriage door.

Their speed was still something to arouse competition, and the rain flew in with emulative force. He threw a robe about the girl and leaned from the door at a sharp angle.

"Turn to the right! To the right, I say, idiot! Dolt!" he cried, mixing the epithets softly among his stentorian commands to the driver. "Straight ahead, now—yes, straight, blockhead!"

They whisked around the corner at a miraculous tilt and spun ahead dizzily. The horse seemed resigned at last to being an active motive power, for the vim of an engine was his. After all, if you have to die, there is some consolation in doing it well.

"Watch out, there's a corner!" shouted the man above the rattle, his



Fifth Talk

face very flushed, although a shower bath fell from the rim of his hat. "Now turn again to the right! Keep on! Back to the left!"

"It sounds like a quadrille," gurgled the maid. "It is just as well that the town is asleep, for the traffic could never get out of our way."

"The police would soon stop us," said the man grimly.

"Oh, I am sure they wouldn't try, they seem so careful of themselves. I hope they won't, anyhow," she added sleepily. "This is so delicious. It makes one feel that one is getting on in life!"

"They say you can get used to anything except hanging," he added to her stoicism.

"Don't you think you have dwelt sufficiently on that automatic theory? I have been concluding that automatons



A Maid and a Man

can be just as eccentric as anything else on occasions."

"Be cheered, Lady," he said, quite as though he had not heard her. He drew in his head, as snails are wont to do. The action was piquant to the maid, because she had hitherto observed snails from only an outside point of view. "We are fast nearing home and mother."

"You looked like a baptized robber," she cried, laughing youthfully. "Now, if I did not know you to be a component of the brains of the country——"

"Is this a time to be unkind, Pat?" he queried softly, with a return of the manner that had been so rudely interrupted by their night's adventure.

"And it is just as well," she continued, "that things are generally not at all what they seem."



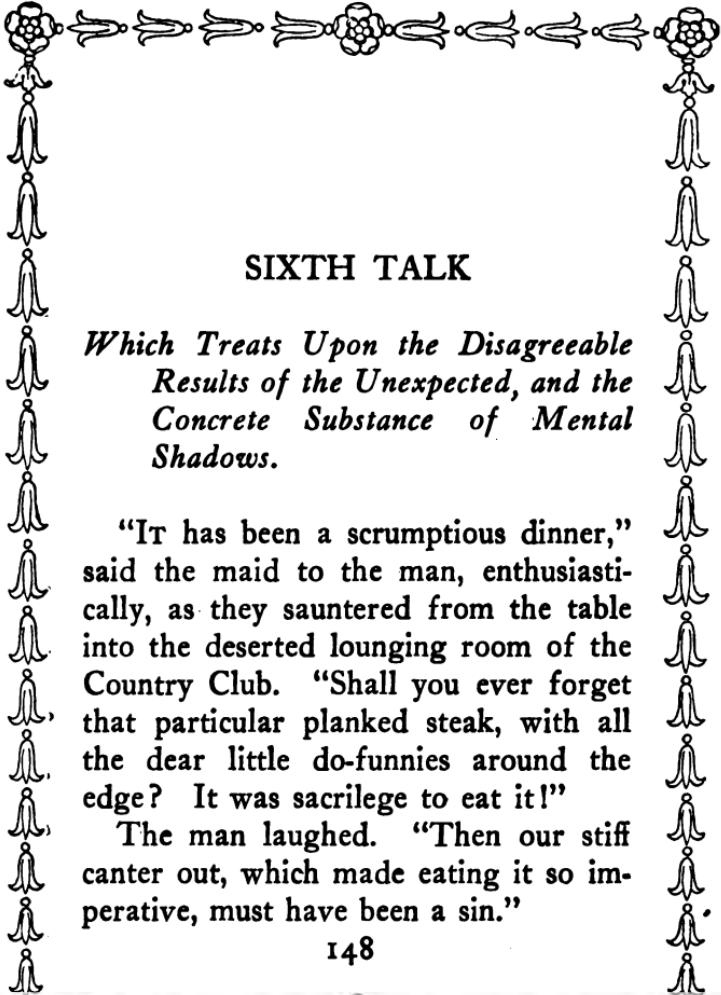
Fifth Talk

As he bent to compel the resisting latch-key into her home door she turned to him gratefully.

"I've had an awfully nice time," she said. "It seems rather inexperienced to enjoy things, but—"

"It is good of you to say so," he began to phrase, as his thoughts shifted back to the supper and the play. "I am very glad if I—"

"Of course, it has not been your fault," she continued brightly, "and they would not do at all as habits; but just as enthusiasms, you know, ecstatic cabbages and automatic action are diverting, aren't they?"



SIXTH TALK

*Which Treats Upon the Disagreeable
Results of the Unexpected, and the
Concrete Substance of Mental
Shadows.*

"IT has been a scrumptious dinner," said the maid to the man, enthusiastically, as they sauntered from the table into the deserted lounging room of the Country Club. "Shall you ever forget that particular planked steak, with all the dear little do-funnies around the edge? It was sacrilege to eat it!"

The man laughed. "Then our stiff canter out, which made eating it so imperative, must have been a sin."



Sixth Talk

"I guess I love to sin," she deducted shamelessly. She settled herself among the cushions of a secluded window seat and prepared to chat. "Isn't Chevy Chase lovable early like this, when we can have it practically to ourselves?"

The man seated himself sedately in an opposite chair and prepared to respond. "Do you mean early in the day or early in the year?" he inquired.

"Stupid! I mean both. To-night, I can easily shut the eyes of my common-sense and imagine that I own it all, this beautiful Colonial room——"

"And the freeze-me open fireplace," inserted the man.

"Yes, and the lawns and trees which we know are lying around outside, just carelessly, you know, although it is too late now to see them."

He laughed again comfortably. "You



A Maid and a Man

remind me of the girl who owned the sailor hat, but did *not* own the yacht."

"At any rate," she said, "our ride out and the dinner was a great pleasure and a most unexpected one."

"You are good to call my little plan an unexpected pleasure," replied the man, "but if you would trust more in the statement of philosophers——"

"That history repeats itself?" she suggested.

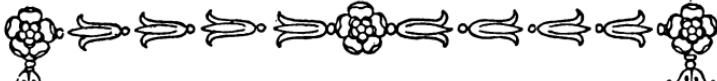
"No; that the unexpected always happens, you would be saved from many shocks. You see, the very improbability of any event would prepare you for its recurrence."

"As theory, Thomas, that may be admirable," she retorted, with a decidedly fluffy manner, "but wouldn't one be frightfully rushed? It keeps one on the move to prepare for the probabilities.



"Our ride out and the dinner was a great pleasure"





Sixth Talk

Your idea would launch one on an ocean of inventiveness. It wearies me to think of it. Come to consider, your theory is absurd."

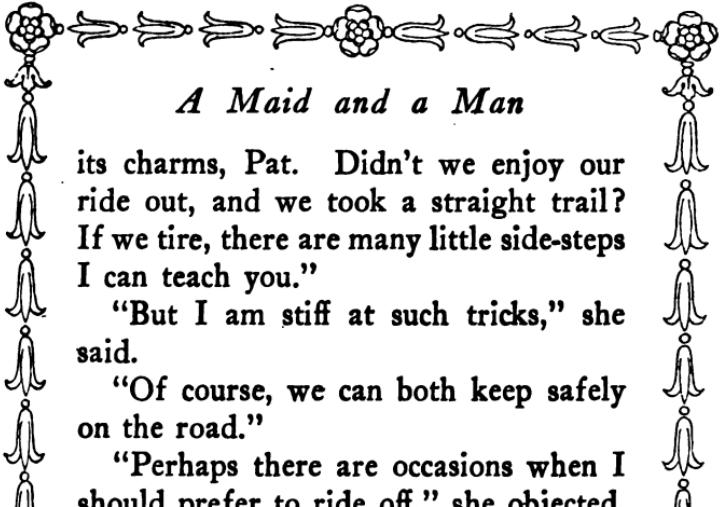
"Oh, I don't know," he maintained, smiling plaintively at the stub toes of her riding-boots. "There don't seem to me very many unexpected things that could happen. The world is hoary and has always kept an amanuensis."

"Don't you suppose there is one little new experience tucked away somewhere for you, Tommy?" asked the maid, with solicitude.

"Well, not many, by Jove!" he exclaimed, accepting her interest wholesale.

Her eyelids lowered over a wicked look. "If you like, I shall try to grow inventive."

"That is not necessary. Pacing even the beaten track with some people has



A Maid and a Man

its charms, Pat. Didn't we enjoy our ride out, and we took a straight trail? If we tire, there are many little side-steps I can teach you."

"But I am stiff at such tricks," she said.

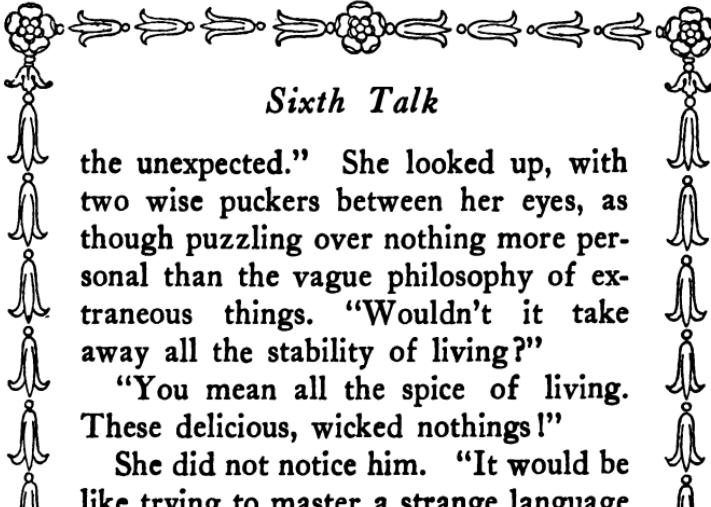
"Of course, we can both keep safely on the road."

"Perhaps there are occasions when I should prefer to ride off," she objected, with a naughty laugh.

For a moment he looked at her mindfully, trying to discriminate between two possible interpretations of her remark. A girl might ride off the road to escape from her companion, or might ride off with him to further explore.

The maid was innocently punching one of the pillows into a wonderful fatness, and he could not decide.

"But about your theory of expecting



Sixth Talk

the unexpected." She looked up, with two wise puckers between her eyes, as though puzzling over nothing more personal than the vague philosophy of extraneous things. "Wouldn't it take away all the stability of living?"

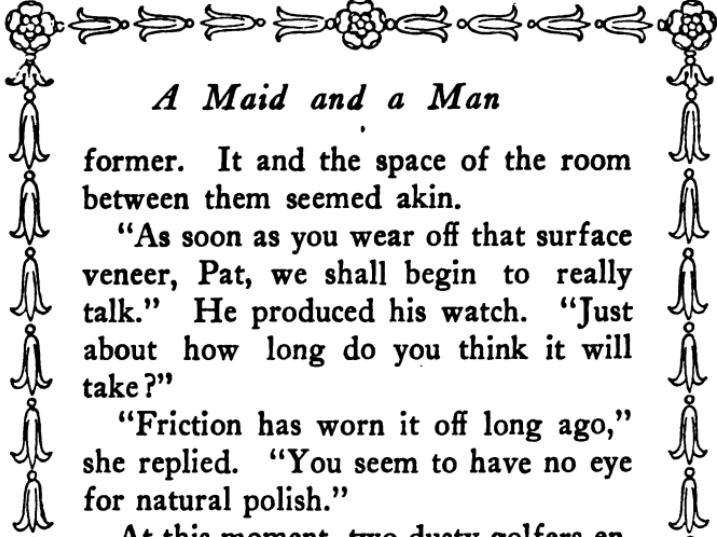
"You mean all the spice of living. These delicious, wicked nothings!"

She did not notice him. "It would be like trying to master a strange language without any grammar."

"If you have a good supply of idioms you can make yourself understood, and that seems quite enough to do," he said.

"In school we used to call them 'idiots.' Personally, I prefer to go by rules, although an idiom now and then is amusing." She was manipulating at once both an extrinsic lightness and an impudence of meaning.

He was concerned chiefly about the



A Maid and a Man

former. It and the space of the room between them seemed akin.

"As soon as you wear off that surface veneer, Pat, we shall begin to really talk." He produced his watch. "Just about how long do you think it will take?"

"Friction has worn it off long ago," she replied. "You seem to have no eye for natural polish."

At this moment, two dusty golfers entered the room, rang for a waiter and ordered cooling drinks. Being men, they cast a fusillade of curious glances toward the girl in the corner. Then they settled down and began to talk absorbedly, in the lingo of the game.

Under the circumstances, it seemed to the man best to curb the more personal impulses that somehow were crowding upon him to-night.



Sixth Talk

"Are you seriously contending, Pat, that every fact and every person can be explained by rules?"

"Yes, all except the idioms. They, of course, are piquant additions."

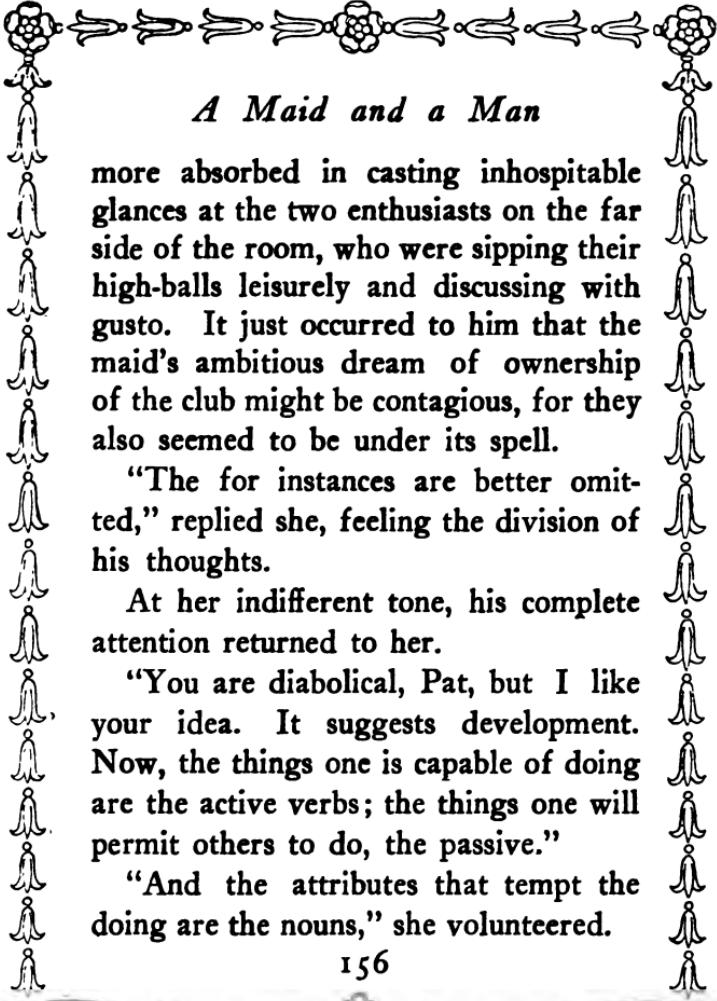
"Then, please Heaven I may be an idiom!"

She frowned upon him. "With some people you might pass as one, but that is just what I do not want you to be. A man should be a stable quantity."

"Hum-m-m, I see. It is not up to a man to be an idiom. He should leave that for the women, I suppose. But these rules of yours, in applying them to me one by one——?"

"I have found some that fit," she stated. "And through knowing you, I have added several to my list."

"For instance?" he asked, rather absently, it must be confessed, for he was



A Maid and a Man

more absorbed in casting inhospitable glances at the two enthusiasts on the far side of the room, who were sipping their high-balls leisurely and discussing with gusto. It just occurred to him that the maid's ambitious dream of ownership of the club might be contagious, for they also seemed to be under its spell.

"The for instances are better omitted," replied she, feeling the division of his thoughts.

At her indifferent tone, his complete attention returned to her.

"You are diabolical, Pat, but I like your idea. It suggests development. Now, the things one is capable of doing are the active verbs; the things one will permit others to do, the passive."

"And the attributes that tempt the doing are the nouns," she volunteered.



Sixth Talk

"I think I could conjugate you thoroughly, Pat."

"That is certainly clever of you. And about the nouns?"

"Perhaps I should not wish to decline them," laughed the man, boldly.

"Oh," she murmured, leaning forward, evidently intent upon watching the toes of her short little boots, "you are very, very kind, but declensions are *so* essential. However, there are few nouns about me. I seem mostly made of passive verbs."

"Just at this moment, you may think you are," he said.

"But," she added softly, with the impressiveness that she donned as occasionally she meant things, "I am quite willing to have their mood changed to active. Don't you think I am immensely frank?"

For other reasons than the intruders



A Maid and a Man

across the room, the man began to feel a trifle uneasy.

"More probably you are immensely deceitful," he said, by this skepticism shirking the responsibilities which her admission entailed. "Which I suppose should be mentioned first, as deceit generates seeming frankness."

Just at this time, when he might almost have wished them to stay, the golfers arose, glanced again at the maid and noisily left the room. By way of contrast, a waiter slipped in stealthily, gathered up the glasses they had left and as stealthily slipped out again, showing by never a glance his consciousness of the interesting couple in the corner.

This studied disregard, more than the open interest of the golfers, cast a spell of embarrassment over the occasion.

The man was watching the maid





Sixth Talk

suspiciously. The way her fingers clasped each other impressed him as quite too intense. But, after all, she had rightly called him Tommy; he could not resist an emotion.

He bent suddenly above her and slid his magnetic hand down her cheek until it uplifted her contradictory, exquisite chin.

"Pat," he said, "I wonder if you care?"

By woman's instinct, her glance first raced uneasily about the room, then settled upon him. She saw that his face was flushed and his look an arbitrary demand.

Her eyes narrowed. It is hard to define just what makes a smile cruel, even when its cruelty is most apparent.

"Doubtless you mean well," she observed quietly in a voice that, unaided by



A Maid and a Man

any physical withdrawal, accomplished the removal of his hand. "But as a means of entertainment, I do not require such punctilious attentions from men."

"I should not accuse you of requiring them from *men*." He began to tour the room, examining a picture here, or a bit of pottery there, as though following a fixed itinerary. Then he halted before the maid and seemed to be regarding her critically.

"You are a very poor likeness of yourself," he said. "You look entirely too human, too feminine, you know, down there among the cushions. Even if I had not been warned beforehand," he continued, as though finding a caustic satisfaction in candor, "your repulsion makes it perfectly evident that I am not *the man*. I am sorry to have annoyed you."



Sixth Talk

In her turn, the maid had been watching him. The seriousness on his face looked real to her and his pale æstheticism made her feel vaguely lumbersome.

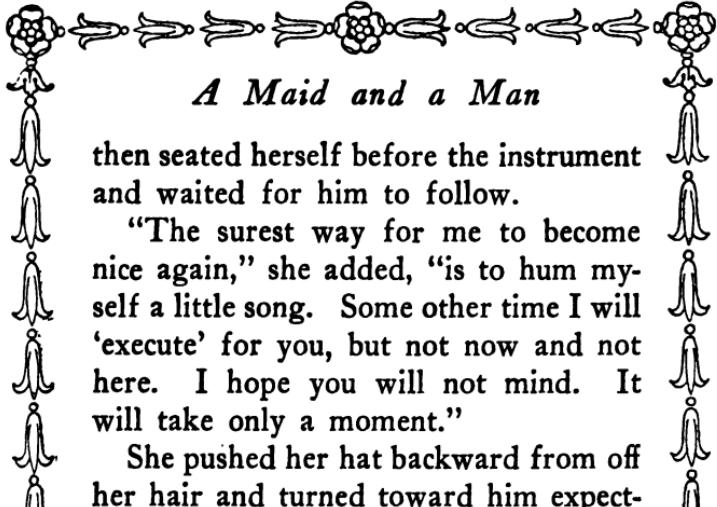
She smiled at him gently. "No man is the man for such attempts, Thomas, except the man who has the right, and the right brings with it many shackling responsibilities."

He did not even look at her, but shrugged in distaste.

"When a fellow is serious," he said, "coquetry jars."

"Come, come, Tommy," she said brightly, "we must not spoil our good evening by calling each other names. I am human and I am feminine. Come to the piano and I will prove it to you."

She glanced once more about the room to reassure herself that they were alone,



A Maid and a Man

then seated herself before the instrument and waited for him to follow.

"The surest way for me to become nice again," she added, "is to hum myself a little song. Some other time I will 'execute' for you, but not now and not here. I hope you will not mind. It will take only a moment."

She pushed her hat backward from off her hair and turned toward him expectantly. She looked peculiarly inviting.

He smiled at her humble addendum. It made him hopeful, for he knew that nondescript performers cannot afford to depreciate themselves. All the confidence they can feel or assume is needed to prop the faith of the listener.

He pulled up a chair and inserted a cushion between the crook of his neck and its high back, so that it would be more comfortable to watch her face. A



Sixth Talk

rest for the head in other places than a dentist's or a photographer's chair can often fortify one for the most trying of ordeals.

The fingers of the maid seemed to be caressing the central keys of the forte. She bent her head low and sidewise, as birds do, as though listening for a signal, and, after she had begun, bent it lower still, as though she wished to only suggest her words to the sympathetic ivories. The man she quite forgot.

Her song was White's "Marguerite," and she did it below the mezzo voice, in tones whose depths was enriched by all those vibratory tricks of feeling that can be taught a woman only by herself. Her highest notes were covered to such a softness that one seemed to be only thinking them.

To a few people she allowed her sing-



A Maid, and a Man

ing to reveal herself. It was not until some moments after the song was ended that she remembered its experimental impetus and glanced at the man.

His head was thrown back upon the cushion and his eyes turned to hers, dilated with perception.

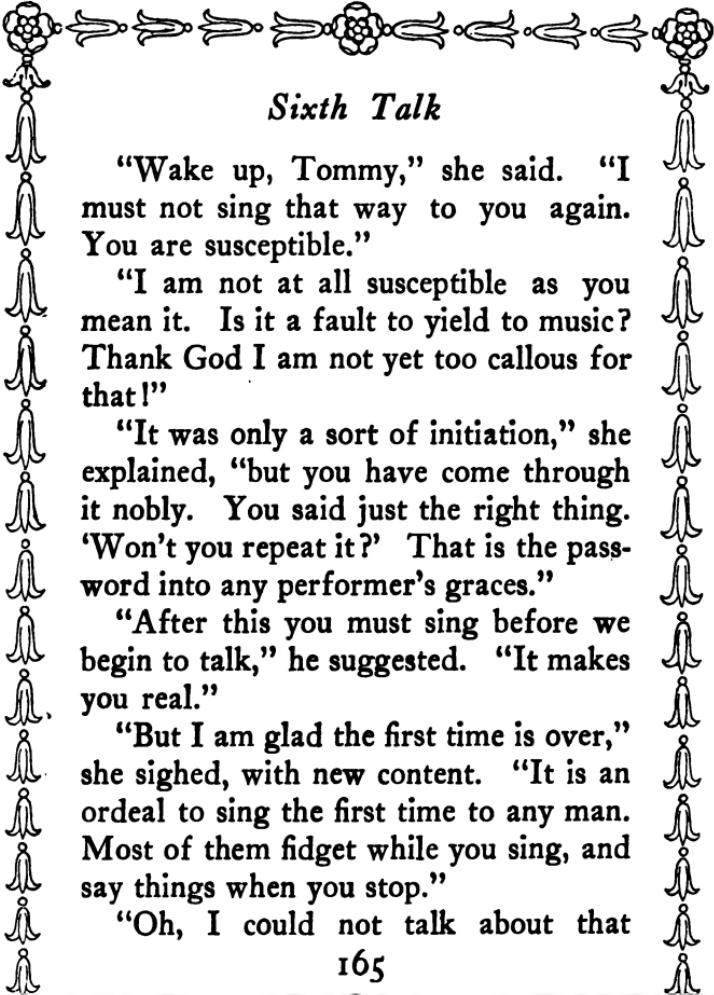
"Won't you repeat it?" he softly begged.

She did not sing again, but coaxed a few bars of the theme from the keys.

Standing close beside her, he bent to lift a lock of her hair that had straggled down her cheek. There was in the little act an intentional tenderness. His fingers were trembling.

"Pardon me," he said. "You look so crisp in your white waist, all but that."

The maid laughed in key with the chord she was playing, but her eyes were very kind.



Sixth Talk

"Wake up, Tommy," she said. "I must not sing that way to you again. You are susceptible."

"I am not at all susceptible as you mean it. Is it a fault to yield to music? Thank God I am not yet too callous for that!"

"It was only a sort of initiation," she explained, "but you have come through it nobly. You said just the right thing. 'Won't you repeat it?' That is the password into any performer's graces."

"After this you must sing before we begin to talk," he suggested. "It makes you real."

"But I am glad the first time is over," she sighed, with new content. "It is an ordeal to sing the first time to any man. Most of them fidget while you sing, and say things when you stop."

"Oh, I could not talk about that



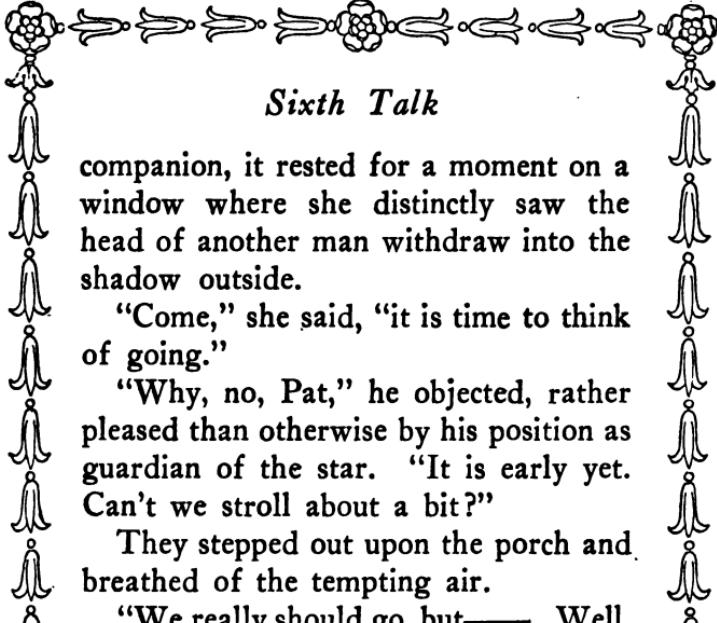
A Maid and a Man

song," he said. "It would be as futile as trying to describe the odors that rise from a crushed white rose."

He seemed to be remembering delights, and she could not believe that his appreciation was assumed.

That oddest of our senses which, without conscious sight or hearing, warns us that others are near, caused the maid to suddenly turn about and then rise abruptly to her feet.

The two golfers had returned and stood in the doorway, enjoying her performance with as obvious a pleasure as though they had paid admission. The ranks of this audience were further swelled by a background of black waiters. Their faces were shining with the acute pleasure in melody that is characteristic of the race. As the glance of the maid swept in annoyance back to her



Sixth Talk

companion, it rested for a moment on a window where she distinctly saw the head of another man withdraw into the shadow outside.

"Come," she said, "it is time to think of going."

"Why, no, Pat," he objected, rather pleased than otherwise by his position as guardian of the star. "It is early yet. Can't we stroll about a bit?"

They stepped out upon the porch and breathed of the tempting air.

"We really should go, but—— Well, just for a little while," she yielded.

They started out upon the path.

"Tommy," she said, "I believe I shall guide you to a favorite spot of mine, where I have often sat before and have had some pretty times."

"With——?" he chided. "Of course, you were not alone."



A Maid and a Man

"Of course not, Tommy. With—the other man."

She led to where the outlines of a garden bench could be seen beneath a loving tree. But her haunt seemed already to be occupied, for a warm red spark, like a firefly, glowed in the dusk, and the vague odors of nature were fast being quenched by a peculiarly pungent cigar.

The maid stopped short in a patch of light cast from a near-by lamp, and seemed to be sniffing the air suspiciously.

The figure on the bench, however, proved to be only that of a solitary and most obliging man, for he arose at once and followed the spark of his cigar off in the opposite direction.

"The environment and my memories must have bewitched me," whispered the maid to herself, as she and her com-



Sixth Talk

panion settled beneath this charming tree. "Certainly I imagined the peculiarity in the smoke of that cigar. Anyhow," she added aloud, "I think cigarettes are far more romantic."

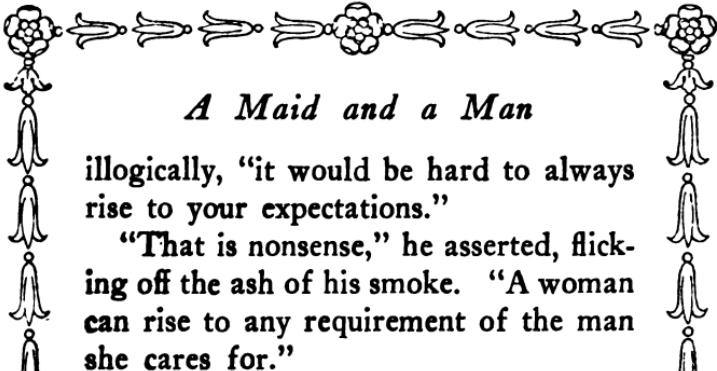
The man obediently lit his.

"I have no fault to find with the night and the place, Pat," began the man.

"No," she agreed. "It is a pleasant place."

"But it appeals to me as the sheerest coquetry for you to bring me here and expect me to say things that will rival your memory of what the other chap has said."

"Twice you have called me a coquette to-night," she lamented. "Coquettes are often unjustly blamed. The very best of women resort to coquetry in indecision. Is it a fault, Tommy, to be only waiting to be convinced? Besides," she added,



A Maid and a Man

illogically, "it would be hard to always rise to your expectations."

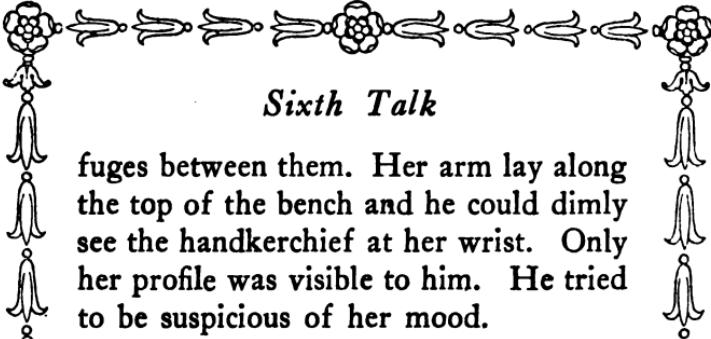
"That is nonsense," he asserted, flicking off the ash of his smoke. "A woman can rise to any requirement of the man she cares for."

"It is too bad men are not so nimble," she retorted. "One cannot always be at vibrating tension. Candidly, it worries me sometimes to have you expecting so much."

"Then that is only an added proof that I am not *the* man."

"I do not wish to show disrespect for your deductions," she replied, "but that is no proof at all. We love perversities. We could never respect the ropes that bind us, if we did not first break our finger-nails trying to untie the knots."

He turned about and peered at her keenly, as though to pierce these subter-



Sixth Talk

fuges between them. Her arm lay along the top of the bench and he could dimly see the handkerchief at her wrist. Only her profile was visible to him. He tried to be suspicious of her mood.

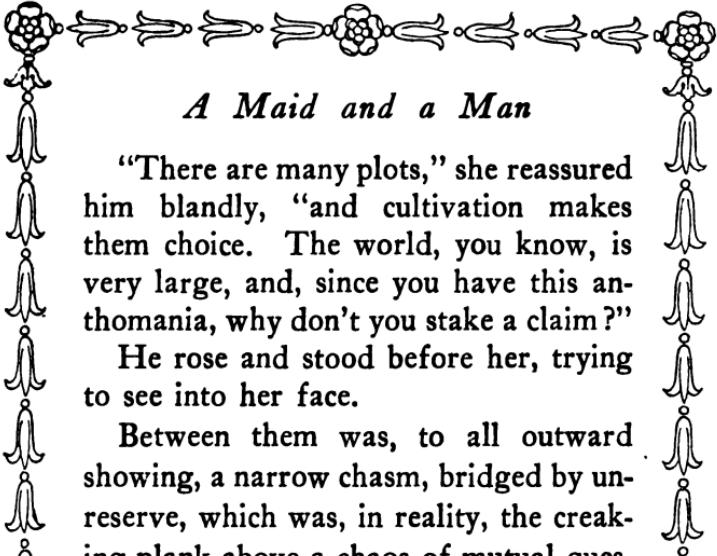
But the impulses of the spring were all about them. The sleepy twitter of birds in the branches above whispered insinuatingly, and all the fresh odors straight from the youth of things crowded in upon his senses.

It was hard, indeed, to live down to the letter of his plan.

"Pat, dear," he murmured, "I'd like to see you with your hands down. I hate this feeling that perhaps I am a trespasser in another man's garden."

"Perhaps?" she queried coldly. "Well, if you wish a garden of your own, the land is not all pre-empted."

"But the choice plots are."



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"There are many plots," she reassured him blandly, "and cultivation makes them choice. The world, you know, is very large, and, since you have this anthomania, why don't you stake a claim?"

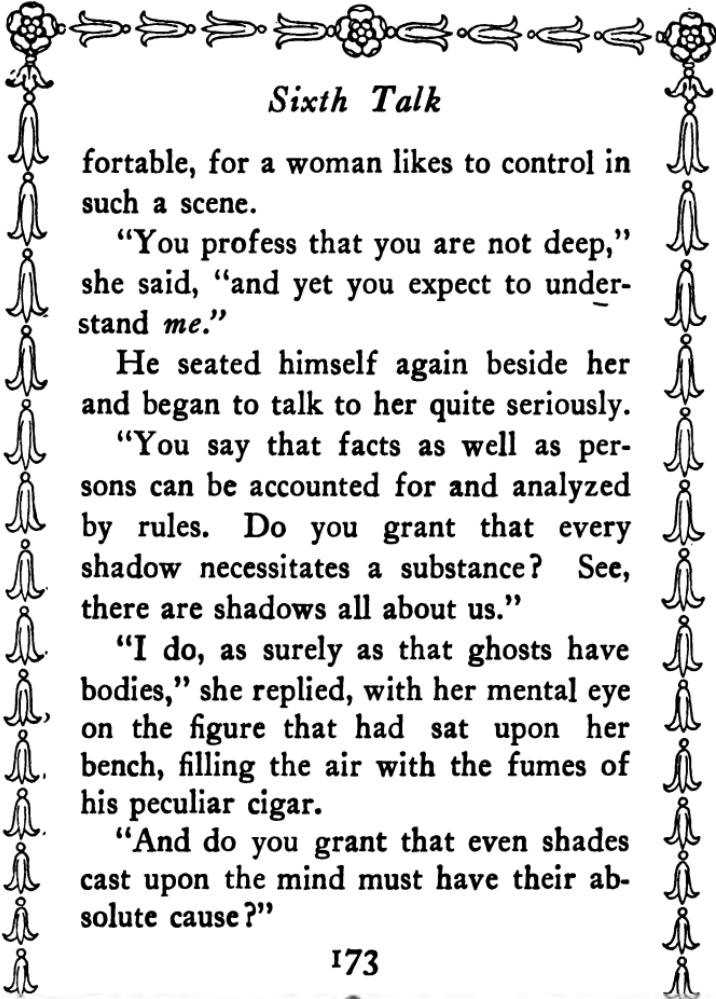
He rose and stood before her, trying to see into her face.

Between them was, to all outward showing, a narrow chasm, bridged by unreserve, which was, in reality, the creaking plank above a chaos of mutual questioning.

He turned from her abruptly.

"No," he said, repeating the word with incision, as though he were alone, "no, I shall not risk appearing so foolish. Sometimes I am afraid I do not understand you, Pat."

The girl laughed in her mezzo key somewhat nervously. She felt uncom-



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fortable, for a woman likes to control in such a scene.

"You profess that you are not deep," she said, "and yet you expect to understand *me*."

He seated himself again beside her and began to talk to her quite seriously.

"You say that facts as well as persons can be accounted for and analyzed by rules. Do you grant that every shadow necessitates a substance? See, there are shadows all about us."

"I do, as surely as that ghosts have bodies," she replied, with her mental eye on the figure that had sat upon her bench, filling the air with the fumes of his peculiar cigar.

"And do you grant that even shades cast upon the mind must have their absolute cause?"



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"I certainly think so," she agreed, with still more conviction.

"Good. There is a shadow on my mind, as you know, Pat. Give me the rule that will definitely locate its substance."

"The rule?" she said leisurely, her face turned in the direction where the cigar had disappeared. "The rule?" she repeated, and smiled through the dusk in a vindictive way. "It does not matter here. But the result, Tommy, is that you must be my nice, platonic friend."

"Lord," he muttered, "that certainly is sufficiently dense for a shadow! Still, I have wondered that you have not proposed it before."

"Well?" she asked, really concerned about his attitude.

So many men insipidly accept the platonic grasp, hiding the sly realization



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that touch is warming. Acquiescence had come to signify to her either inexperience or dishonesty in the man.

"Of course, your proposition is absurd!" he blustered. "And to think that you could have proposed it on a night like this! I am sorry that you think me so young."

"I don't think any man is too young to try," she coaxed, deceptively.

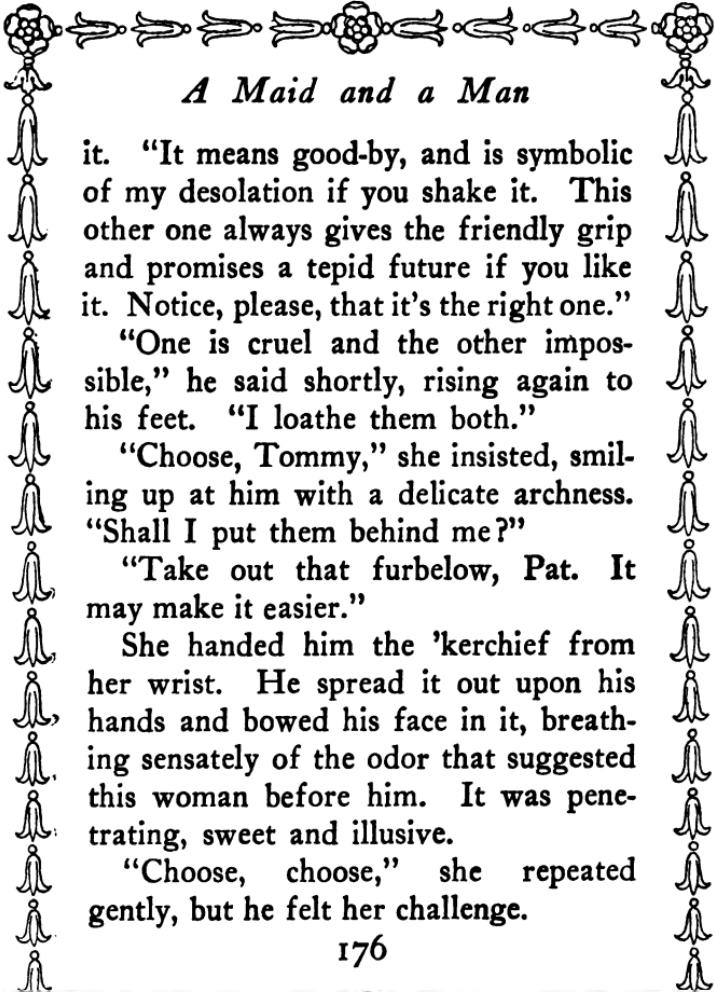
"But, thank Heaven, some of us are too old. Platonism with you, Pat!"

The maid leaned back with a laugh that came from spontaneous pleasure.

"See, my friend, I have two hands," she persisted, reaching them toward him.

"I cannot see plainly, but I know they are clumsy and unique," observed the man critically. "I like them both."

"Then I'll help to show you. This is the left one," she proceeded, raising



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it. "It means good-by, and is symbolic of my desolation if you shake it. This other one always gives the friendly grip and promises a tepid future if you like it. Notice, please, that it's the right one."

"One is cruel and the other impossible," he said shortly, rising again to his feet. "I loathe them both."

"Choose, Tommy," she insisted, smiling up at him with a delicate archness. "Shall I put them behind me?"

"Take out that furbelow, Pat. It may make it easier."

She handed him the 'kerchief from her wrist. He spread it out upon his hands and bowed his face in it, breathing sensately of the odor that suggested this woman before him. It was penetrating, sweet and illusive.

"Choose, choose," she repeated gently, but he felt her challenge.



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"If I take the right one, Pat, the left must follow."

Grasping both her hands in his firmly, he bent so low above her that her head was forced back. For a moment he looked closely into her forbidding eyes and she could feel his pulses beat. So sudden had been this transit to earnest from seeming jest, that he could not realize its portentousness.

All at once he stooped his head and crushed upon her mouth one of those kisses that are sanctioned only by a shared impetuosity.

The maid struggled to her feet. Her face flamed like a rose, but her voice was as sharp and cool as a saber.

"Now," she said, and the angle of her chin was a delight to see, "you may go, straight out of my life! Some men would not need the telling, but I take



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a keen delight in so far coaching your decrepit instincts."

The head of the man was dutifully drooped, although, had the light been clearer, she might have seen that he was enjoying himself. "I am not sorry, and I will not be blamed, because I could not help it."

"And I wish my conscience were as clear! I should never have trusted myself to come out here with you," she exclaimed, slashing the sword a bit freely under the impetus of his coolness. "I blame myself vastly for not having been able to class you sooner. You have come to the wrong girl to find a—a barmaid!"

"Pat, dear," he replied quietly, realizing that he must tap his case of oils, "no woman is ever defiled by the honest kiss of an honest man, and you are quite too keen to entertain a cad unawares.



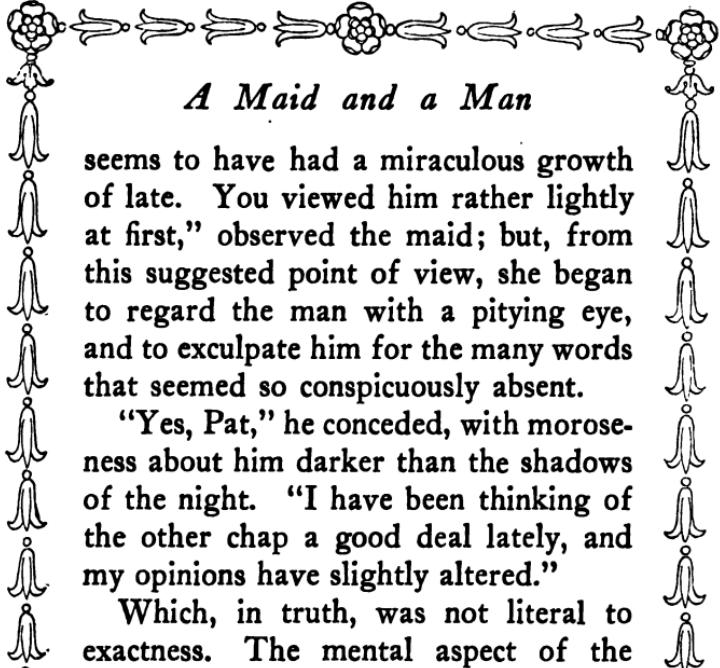
Sixth Talk

My desire is proof that you are above reproach in my mind, and you certainly understand that I should not have offended had I not been so truly fond of you. There, it is said," he added, as though driven to the confession by an irresistible impulse. "That day you walked into my office, you walked into my heart."

"Fond of me!" exclaimed the maid scornfully. "Are you trying to make the natural result of propinquity the excuse for a crime? You are odious!"

"Yes," he repeated, "I am fond of you, and you are not at all surprised. Egotist!" He gazed at her with sad affection. "Your instinct warned you long ago, else you would not have told me about the—the other chap, you know."

"The importance of the other man



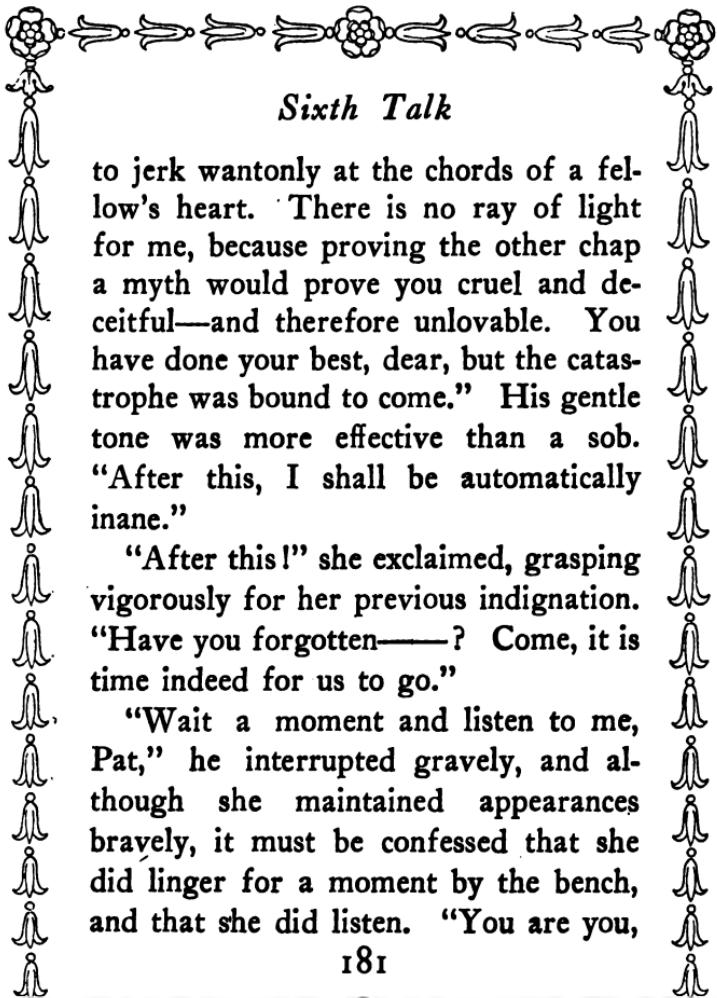
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seems to have had a miraculous growth of late. You viewed him rather lightly at first," observed the maid; but, from this suggested point of view, she began to regard the man with a pitying eye, and to exculpate him for the many words that seemed so conspicuously absent.

"Yes, Pat," he conceded, with moroseness about him darker than the shadows of the night. "I have been thinking of the other chap a good deal lately, and my opinions have slightly altered."

Which, in truth, was not literal to exactness. The mental aspect of the other man in the guise of a bulwark had not come to him with labored thought, but possessed all the value of an inspiration.

Behind this bulwark he proceeded to crouch. "I tried at first to disregard him, but you, of course, are not a woman

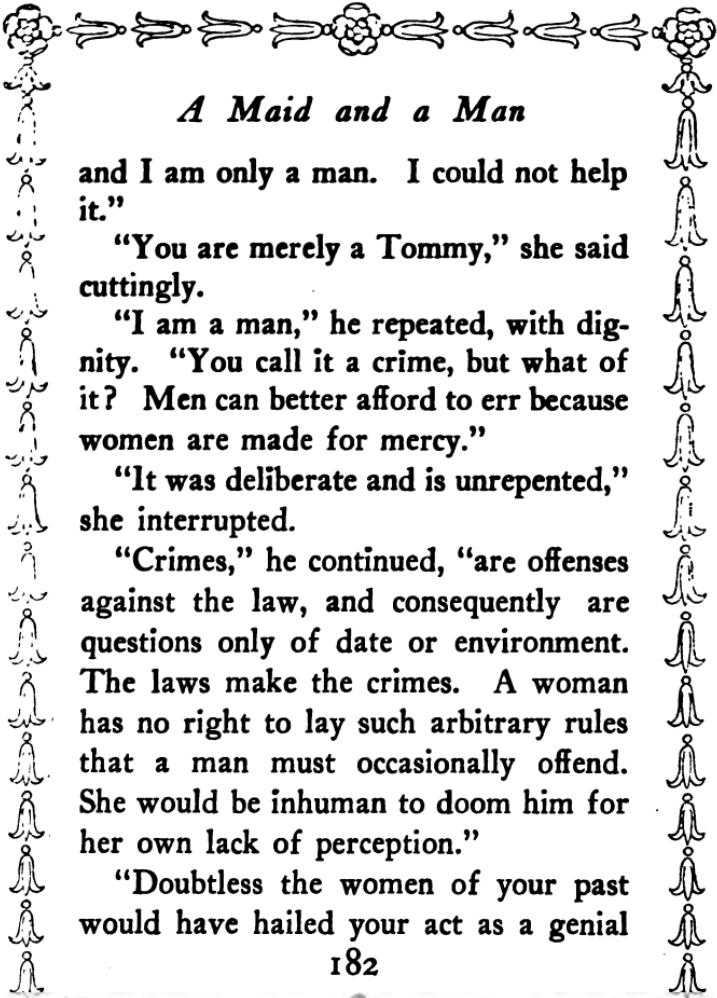


Sixth Talk

to jerk wantonly at the chords of a fellow's heart. There is no ray of light for me, because proving the other chap a myth would prove you cruel and deceitful—and therefore unlovable. You have done your best, dear, but the catastrophe was bound to come." His gentle tone was more effective than a sob. "After this, I shall be automatically inane."

"After this!" she exclaimed, grasping vigorously for her previous indignation. "Have you forgotten——? Come, it is time indeed for us to go."

"Wait a moment and listen to me, Pat," he interrupted gravely, and although she maintained appearances bravely, it must be confessed that she did linger for a moment by the bench, and that she did listen. "You are you,



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and I am only a man. I could not help it."

"You are merely a Tommy," she said cuttingly.

"I am a man," he repeated, with dignity. "You call it a crime, but what of it? Men can better afford to err because women are made for mercy."

"It was deliberate and is unrepented," she interrupted.

"Crimes," he continued, "are offenses against the law, and consequently are questions only of date or environment. The laws make the crimes. A woman has no right to lay such arbitrary rules that a man must occasionally offend. She would be inhuman to doom him for her own lack of perception."

"Doubtless the women of your past would have hailed your act as a genial



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little pastime, but it is a crime to me," she said stubbornly.

"You have no right to make such laws," said the man.

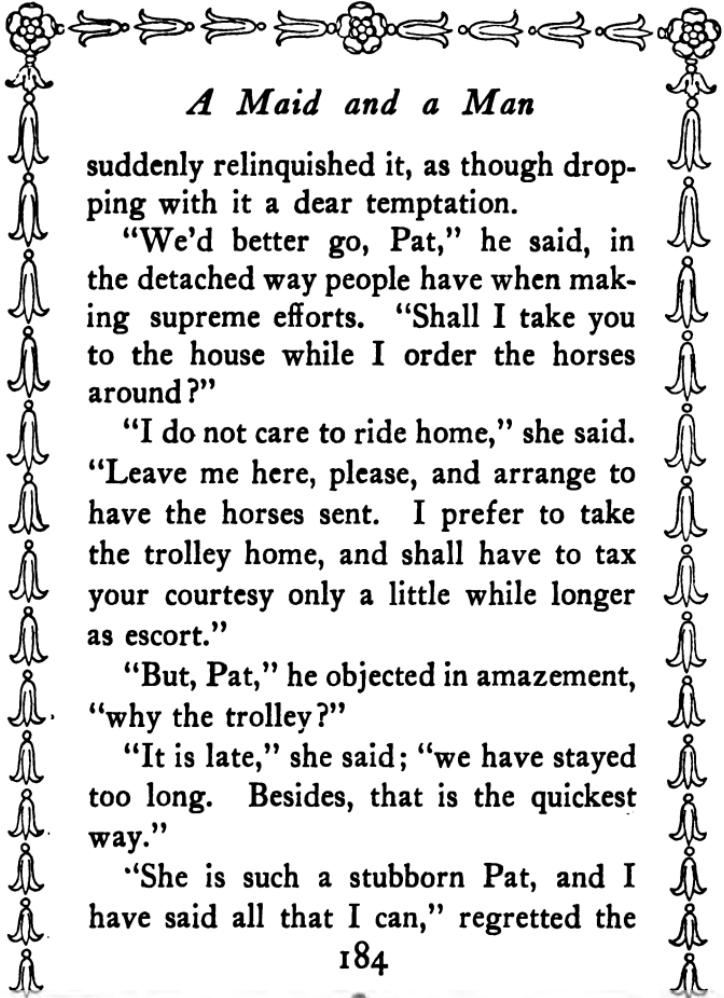
"Moral laws are not of human manufacture."

"The offense appeals to me as more a physical one," he suggested, smacking the lips of his memory over the thought.

"Well, society does allow a man to regard such acts as merely physical," she admitted, tapping the bench impatiently with her riding-crop, "but a woman is required to pay for them the penalty of moral crimes. A woman, to be true to herself, can be true to only one man and, of course, there are the obligations."

It was the succeeding pause more than these words that warned the man to end the argument.

He seized her hand suddenly and as



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suddenly relinquished it, as though dropping with it a dear temptation.

"We'd better go, Pat," he said, in the detached way people have when making supreme efforts. "Shall I take you to the house while I order the horses around?"

"I do not care to ride home," she said. "Leave me here, please, and arrange to have the horses sent. I prefer to take the trolley home, and shall have to tax your courtesy only a little while longer as escort."

"But, Pat," he objected in amazement, "why the trolley?"

"It is late," she said; "we have stayed too long. Besides, that is the quickest way."

"She is such a stubborn Pat, and I have said all that I can," regretted the



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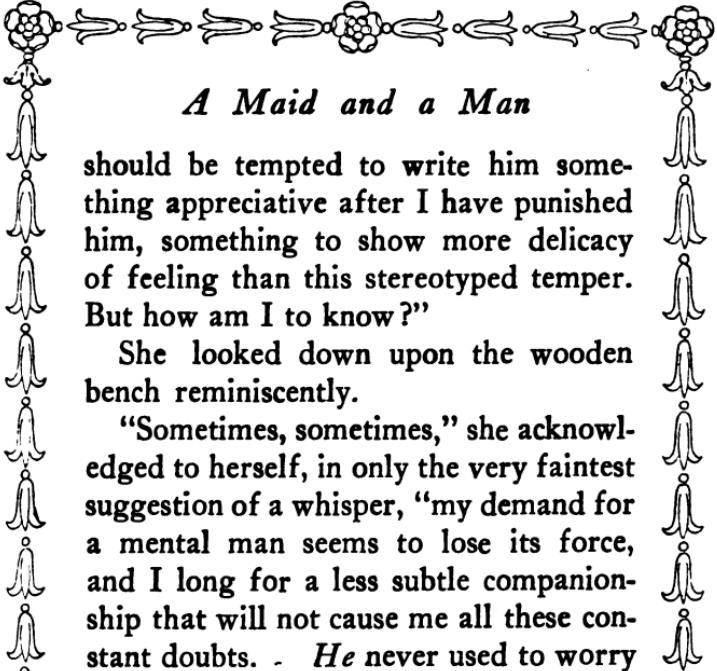
man sadly. "Of course, it shall be as you wish. But think it over, little one. Queenship engenders mercy—and the queen can do no wrong."

"But queens *do* do wrong," she murmured, thus voicing the discomfort that filled her.

Although she bowed him stiffly away, the tension of her questioning mind was far more taut than that of her body.

A woman has many instincts, and when they are caught by two conflicting winds, it takes a keen eye to determine the direction of the majority.

"He worries me," she told herself, "he and his mental gymnastics! Sometimes my mind feels so clumsy. I don't seem able to grasp things. If he is a cunning little beast, it is high time I should know it. If he is what he appears, and if I could only be sure, I

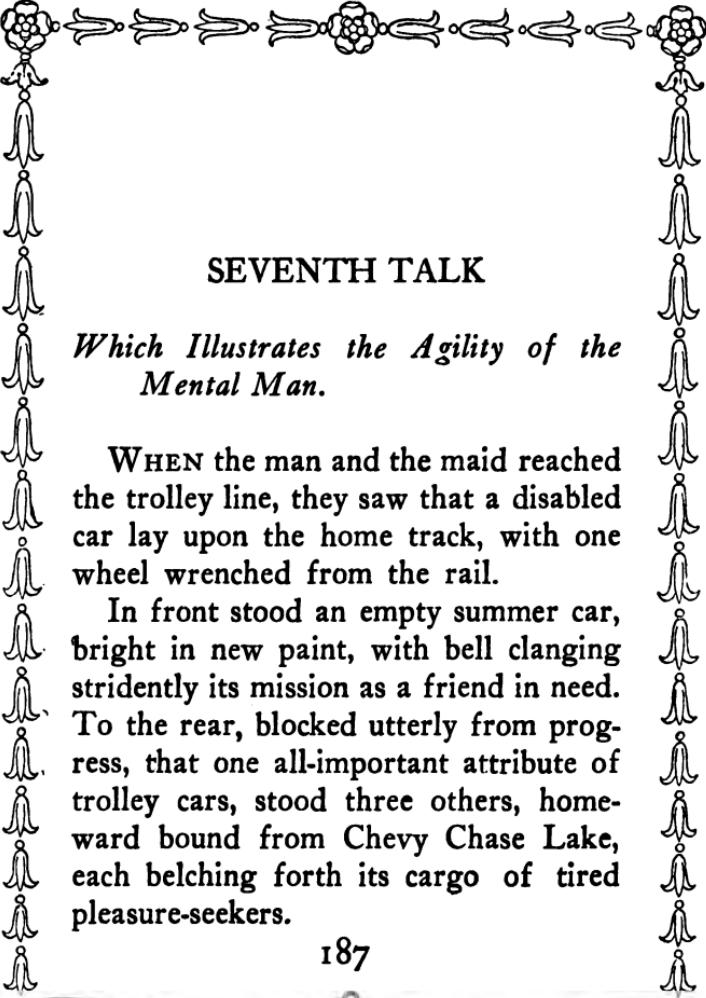


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should be tempted to write him something appreciative after I have punished him, something to show more delicacy of feeling than this stereotyped temper. But how am I to know?"

She looked down upon the wooden bench reminiscently.

"Sometimes, sometimes," she acknowledged to herself, in only the very faintest suggestion of a whisper, "my demand for a mental man seems to lose its force, and I long for a less subtle companionship that will not cause me all these constant doubts. *He* never used to worry me. Rather, I suppose, I worried *him*."

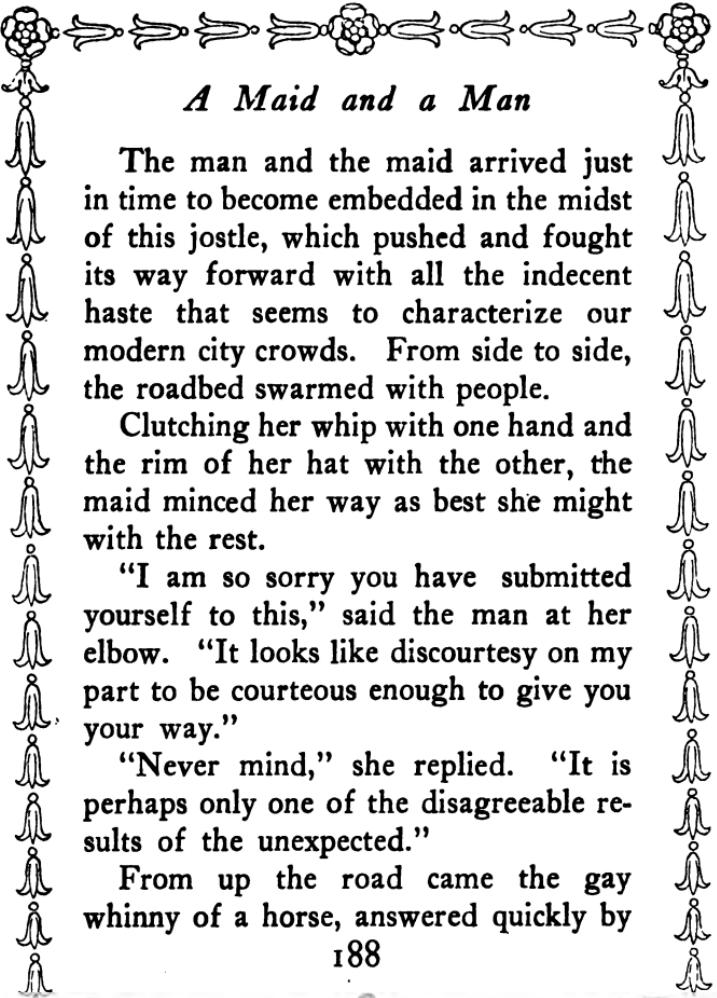


SEVENTH TALK

Which Illustrates the Agility of the Mental Man.

WHEN the man and the maid reached the trolley line, they saw that a disabled car lay upon the home track, with one wheel wrenched from the rail.

In front stood an empty summer car, bright in new paint, with bell clanging stridently its mission as a friend in need. To the rear, blocked utterly from progress, that one all-important attribute of trolley cars, stood three others, homeward bound from Chevy Chase Lake, each belching forth its cargo of tired pleasure-seekers.



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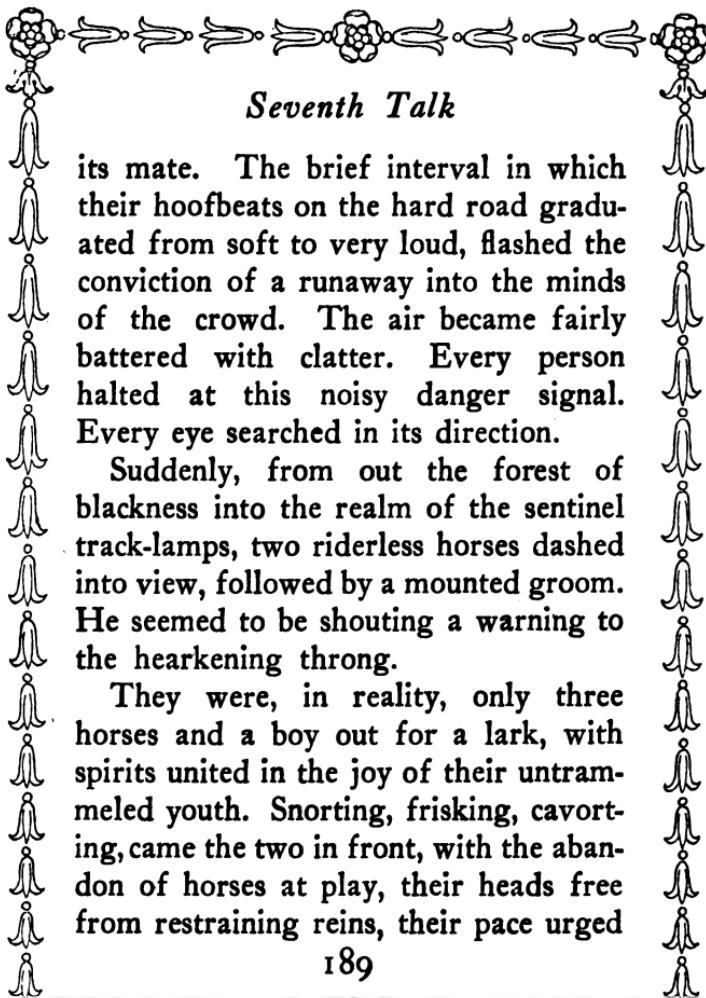
The man and the maid arrived just in time to become embedded in the midst of this jostle, which pushed and fought its way forward with all the indecent haste that seems to characterize our modern city crowds. From side to side, the roadbed swarmed with people.

Clutching her whip with one hand and the rim of her hat with the other, the maid minced her way as best she might with the rest.

"I am so sorry you have submitted yourself to this," said the man at her elbow. "It looks like courtesy on my part to be courteous enough to give you your way."

"Never mind," she replied. "It is perhaps only one of the disagreeable results of the unexpected."

From up the road came the gay whinny of a horse, answered quickly by

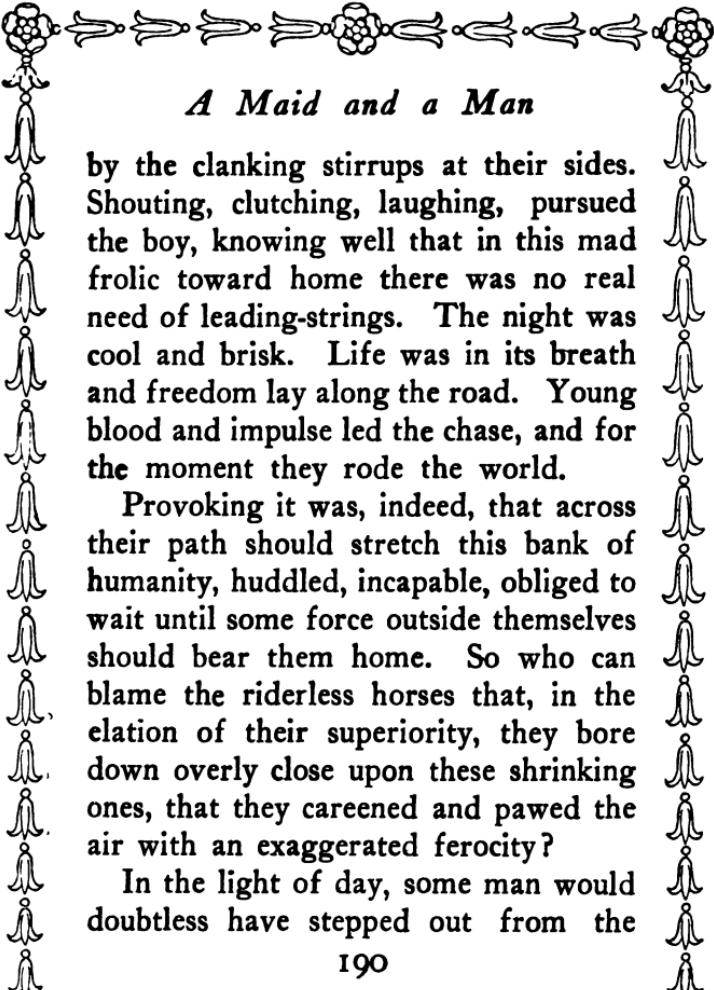


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its mate. The brief interval in which their hoofbeats on the hard road graduated from soft to very loud, flashed the conviction of a runaway into the minds of the crowd. The air became fairly battered with clatter. Every person halted at this noisy danger signal. Every eye searched in its direction.

Suddenly, from out the forest of blackness into the realm of the sentinel track-lamps, two riderless horses dashed into view, followed by a mounted groom. He seemed to be shouting a warning to the hearkening throng.

They were, in reality, only three horses and a boy out for a lark, with spirits united in the joy of their untrammeled youth. Snorting, frisking, cavorting, came the two in front, with the abandon of horses at play, their heads free from restraining reins, their pace urged



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by the clanking stirrups at their sides. Shouting, clutching, laughing, pursued the boy, knowing well that in this mad frolic toward home there was no real need of leading-strings. The night was cool and brisk. Life was in its breath and freedom lay along the road. Young blood and impulse led the chase, and for the moment they rode the world.

Provoking it was, indeed, that across their path should stretch this bank of humanity, huddled, incapable, obliged to wait until some force outside themselves should bear them home. So who can blame the riderless horses that, in the elation of their superiority, they bore down overly close upon these shrinking ones, that they careened and pawed the air with an exaggerated ferocity?

In the light of day, some man would doubtless have stepped out from the

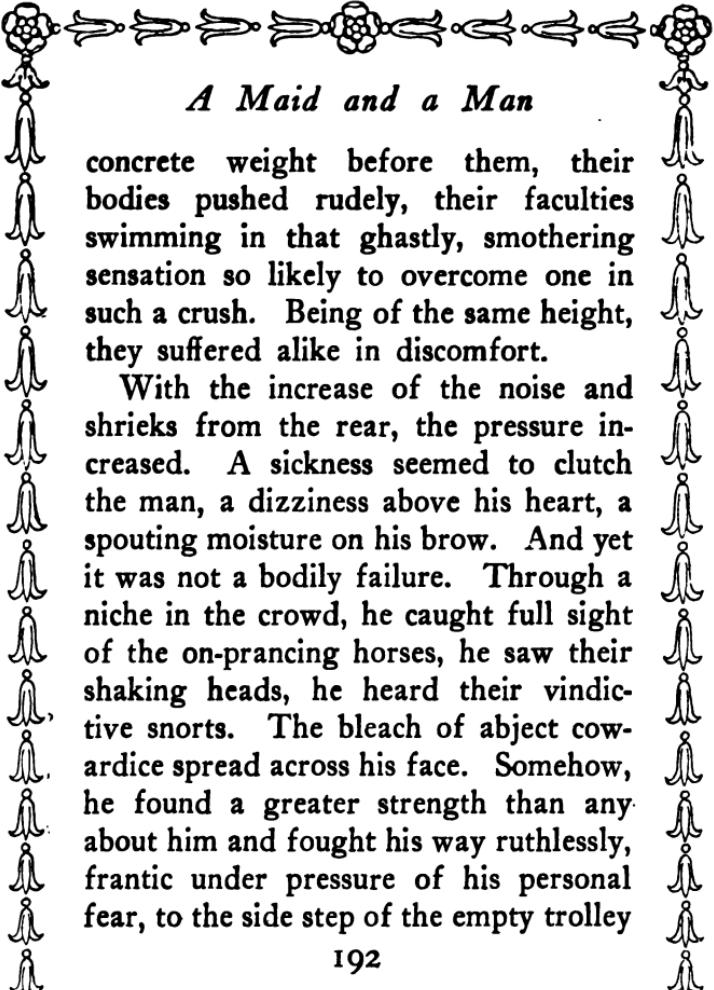


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ranks and, with intelligence, have conquered the beasts. But in the strange, dark caverns of the night, with only an occasional sputtering light to suggest what lay beyond, unknown horrors lurked and panic struck the heart.

A moment of crude impulse seized the crowd. They were in a narrow, fenced-in track and the stampede was inevitable. All laws except that primal one of self-protection were forgot. Women shrieked and struggled forward. Men cursed and pushed aside the weaker ones. The unfortunates on the outer circle were fairly frantic with terror for their lives. All strove, with tense muscles and lax souls, toward that one small haven of safety, the empty car ahead.

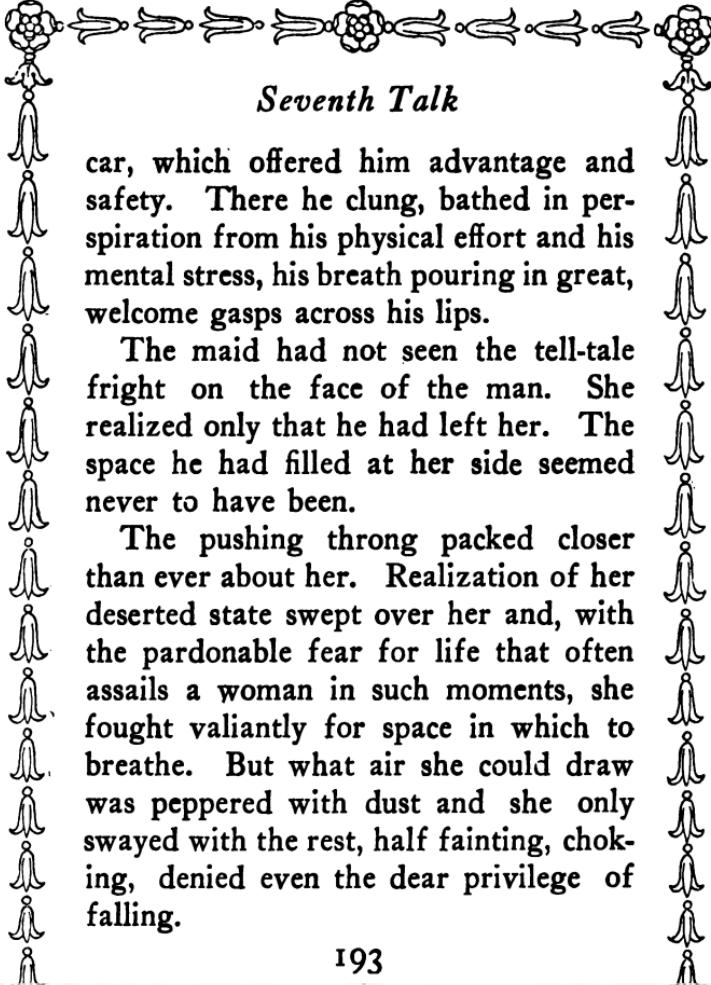
Well toward the front, the man and maid had heard the tumult in their wake, and, with the rest, struggled against the



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concrete weight before them, their bodies pushed rudely, their faculties swimming in that ghastly, smothering sensation so likely to overcome one in such a crush. Being of the same height, they suffered alike in discomfort.

With the increase of the noise and shrieks from the rear, the pressure increased. A sickness seemed to clutch the man, a dizziness above his heart, a spouting moisture on his brow. And yet it was not a bodily failure. Through a niche in the crowd, he caught full sight of the on-prancing horses, he saw their shaking heads, he heard their vindictive snorts. The bleach of abject cowardice spread across his face. Somehow, he found a greater strength than any about him and fought his way ruthlessly, frantic under pressure of his personal fear, to the side step of the empty trolley

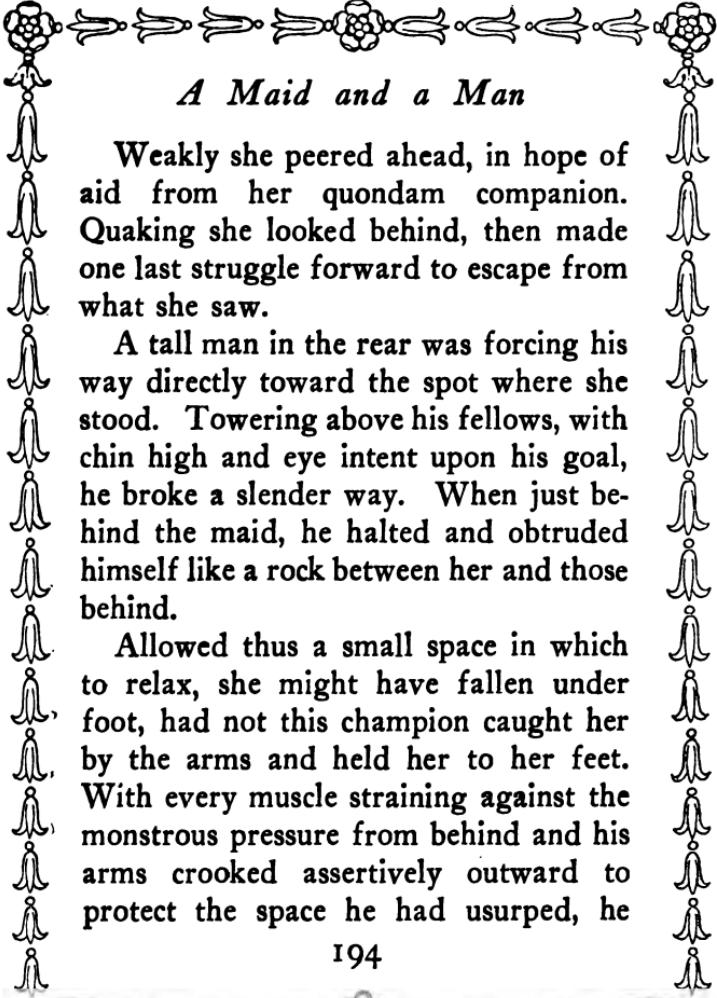


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car, which offered him advantage and safety. There he clung, bathed in perspiration from his physical effort and his mental stress, his breath pouring in great, welcome gasps across his lips.

The maid had not seen the tell-tale fright on the face of the man. She realized only that he had left her. The space he had filled at her side seemed never to have been.

The pushing throng packed closer than ever about her. Realization of her deserted state swept over her and, with the pardonable fear for life that often assails a woman in such moments, she fought valiantly for space in which to breathe. But what air she could draw was peppered with dust and she only swayed with the rest, half fainting, choking, denied even the dear privilege of falling.

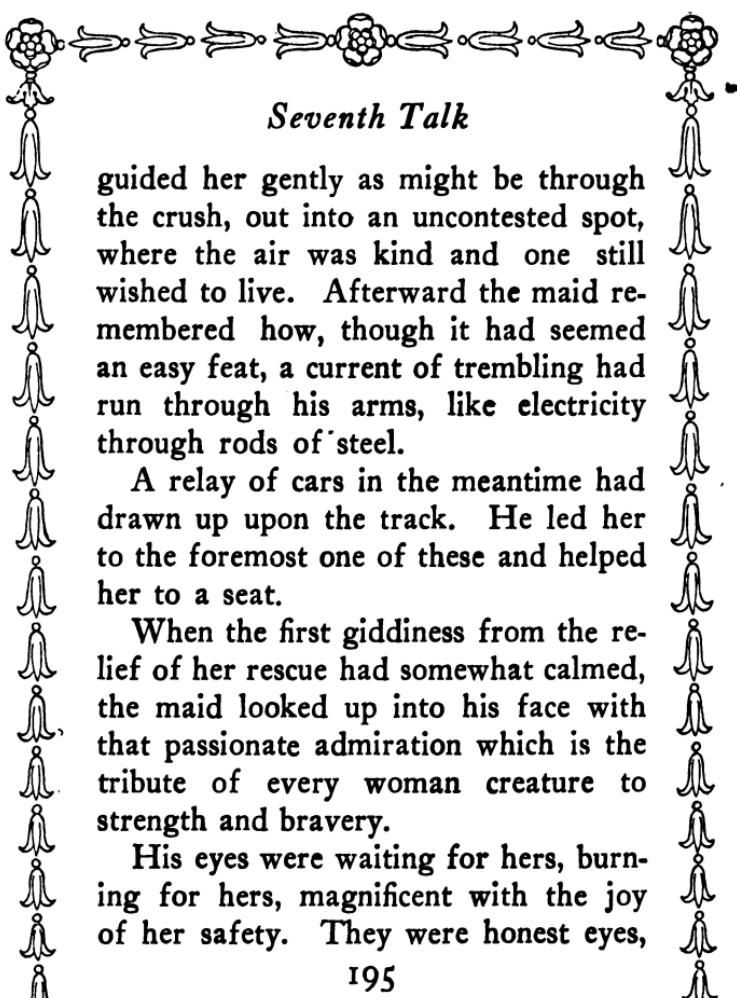


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Weakly she peered ahead, in hope of aid from her quondam companion. Quaking she looked behind, then made one last struggle forward to escape from what she saw.

A tall man in the rear was forcing his way directly toward the spot where she stood. Towering above his fellows, with chin high and eye intent upon his goal, he broke a slender way. When just behind the maid, he halted and obtruded himself like a rock between her and those behind.

Allowed thus a small space in which to relax, she might have fallen under foot, had not this champion caught her by the arms and held her to her feet. With every muscle straining against the monstrous pressure from behind and his arms crooked assertively outward to protect the space he had usurped, he



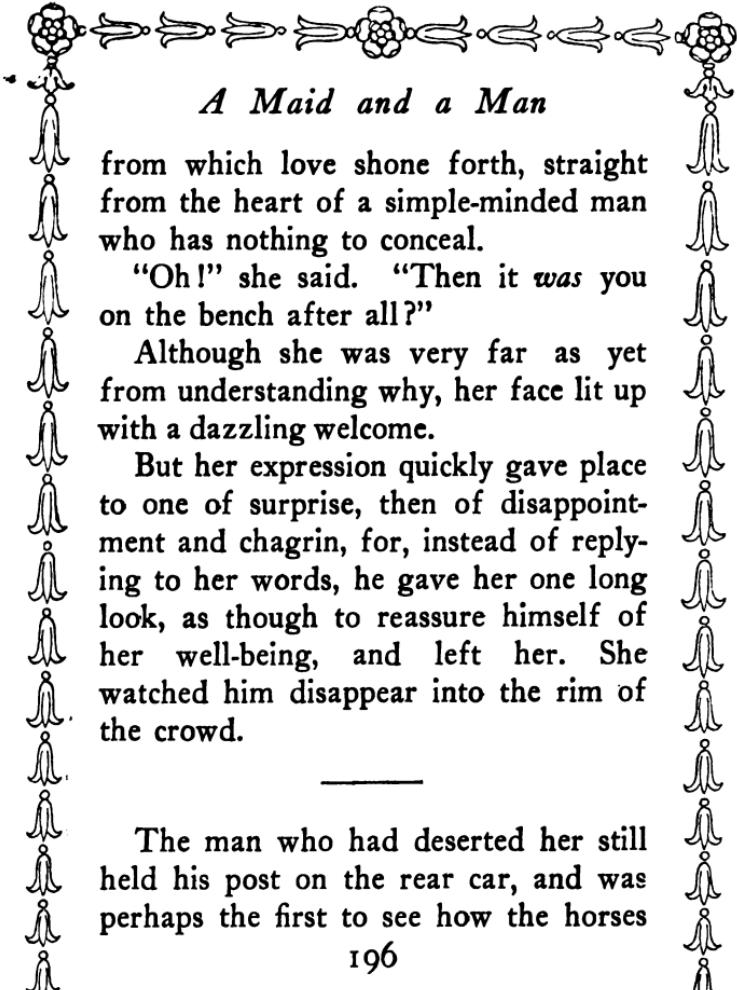
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guided her gently as might be through the crush, out into an uncontested spot, where the air was kind and one still wished to live. Afterward the maid remembered how, though it had seemed an easy feat, a current of trembling had run through his arms, like electricity through rods of steel.

A relay of cars in the meantime had drawn up upon the track. He led her to the foremost one of these and helped her to a seat.

When the first giddiness from the relief of her rescue had somewhat calmed, the maid looked up into his face with that passionate admiration which is the tribute of every woman creature to strength and bravery.

His eyes were waiting for hers, burning for hers, magnificent with the joy of her safety. They were honest eyes,



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from which love shone forth, straight from the heart of a simple-minded man who has nothing to conceal.

"Oh!" she said. "Then it *was* you on the bench after all?"

Although she was very far as yet from understanding why, her face lit up with a dazzling welcome.

But her expression quickly gave place to one of surprise, then of disappointment and chagrin, for, instead of replying to her words, he gave her one long look, as though to reassure himself of her well-being, and left her. She watched him disappear into the rim of the crowd.

The man who had deserted her still held his post on the rear car, and was perhaps the first to see how the horses



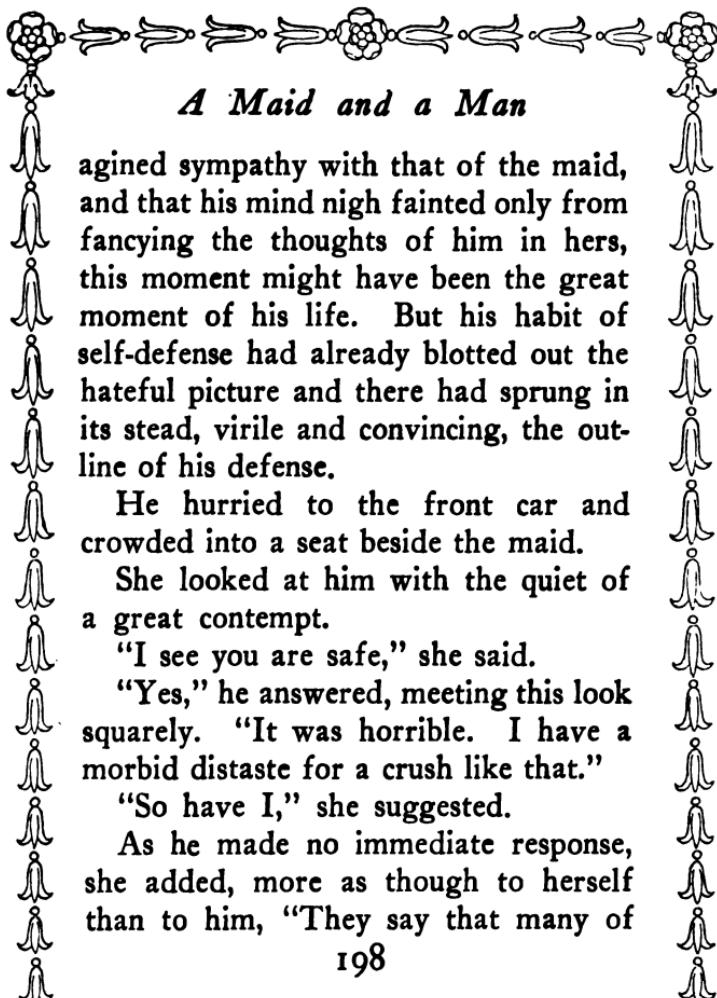
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suddenly swerved to one side of the road, where a narrow passage had been forced for them, dashed recklessly through and disappeared into the night, capering, regardless of the havoc they had wrought.

From this vantage point, still weak from the stress of his escape, he had witnessed the rescue of the maid, and with that true artistic perception peculiar to him, had appreciated the mind which had conceived and executed the plan.

As though in a biograph picture shifting before him, his own deed and his own self shot out beside that of the rescuer, and it seemed to be the picture of a giant and a pygmy. His soul shuddered at the contrast. His mind nigh fainted from near realization. It was his chance.

Had it not been that the soul of this man shuddered, not of itself, but in im-



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agined sympathy with that of the maid, and that his mind nigh fainted only from fancying the thoughts of him in hers, this moment might have been the great moment of his life. But his habit of self-defense had already blotted out the hateful picture and there had sprung in its stead, virile and convincing, the outline of his defense.

He hurried to the front car and crowded into a seat beside the maid.

She looked at him with the quiet of a great contempt.

"I see you are safe," she said.

"Yes," he answered, meeting this look squarely. "It was horrible. I have a morbid distaste for a crush like that."

"So have I," she suggested.

As he made no immediate response, she added, more as though to herself than to him, "They say that many of



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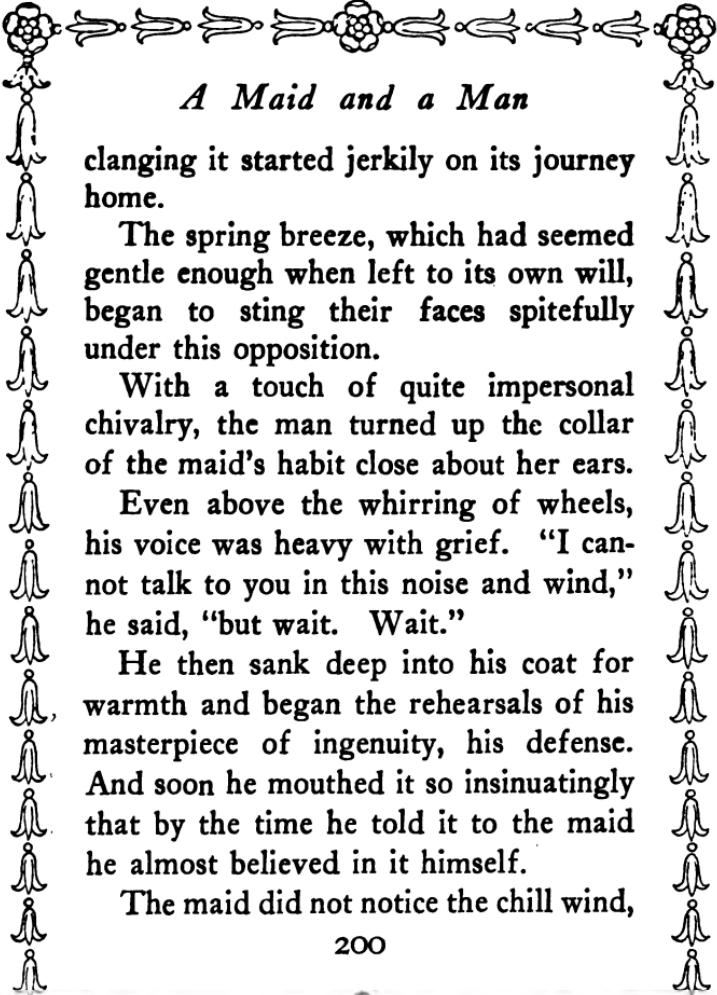
the bravest soldiers turn coward in the first throes of battle. That does not seem so bad, to turn coward for personal fear, but to desert a woman—to desert a woman—

"Tell me," she broke off, turning upon him with a harsh little laugh, "were you trying to be an idiom, or do you think you behaved like the ordinary rule of a man?"

His eyes gazed wonderingly into hers, his chest expanding with one long intake of breath. Then, "Pat!" he exclaimed, with the weight of a heavy pain in his voice, "surely you don't mean——? No, it is not possible you believe *that* of me!"

She met his look of reproach with as long a one of amazement.

By this time the car had been filled to its utmost capacity, and with a loud



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clanging it started jerkily on its journey home.

The spring breeze, which had seemed gentle enough when left to its own will, began to sting their faces spitefully under this opposition.

With a touch of quite impersonal chivalry, the man turned up the collar of the maid's habit close about her ears.

Even above the whirring of wheels, his voice was heavy with grief. "I cannot talk to you in this noise and wind," he said, "but wait. Wait."

He then sank deep into his coat for warmth and began the rehearsals of his masterpiece of ingenuity, his defense. And soon he mouthed it so insinuatingly that by the time he told it to the maid he almost believed in it himself.

The maid did not notice the chill wind,



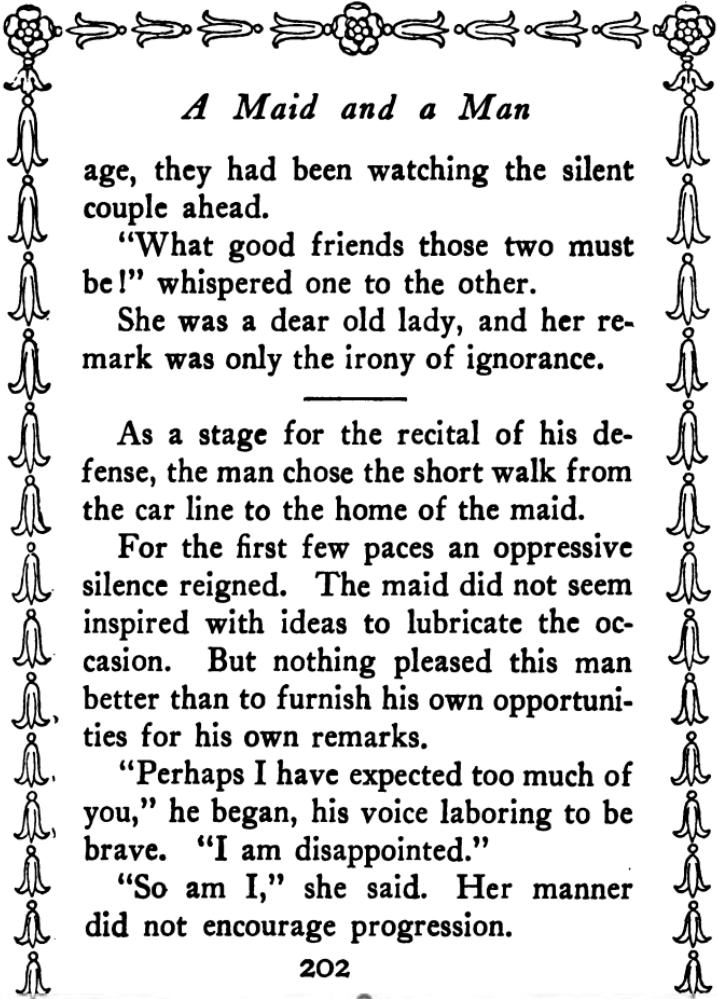
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for her mind had veered to warming thoughts of her rescuer.

"At first he looked so glad, so glad," she communed with herself. "But why should he turn and leave me when I tried to speak?"

Then a bright little spark shot up, not in her introspective mind, but deep down among the embers of her heart. She laughed a gay laugh within herself. "His promise, of course!" she exclaimed. "He said he would not come until the time I named was up. Even to-night, he did not forget. My good, punctilious Banks, he did not forget!"

Upon the seat behind them, two old ladies were bunched together comfortingly against the cold. With the selfless pleasure in youth and romance which is perhaps the very prettiest attribute of



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age, they had been watching the silent couple ahead.

"What good friends those two must be!" whispered one to the other.

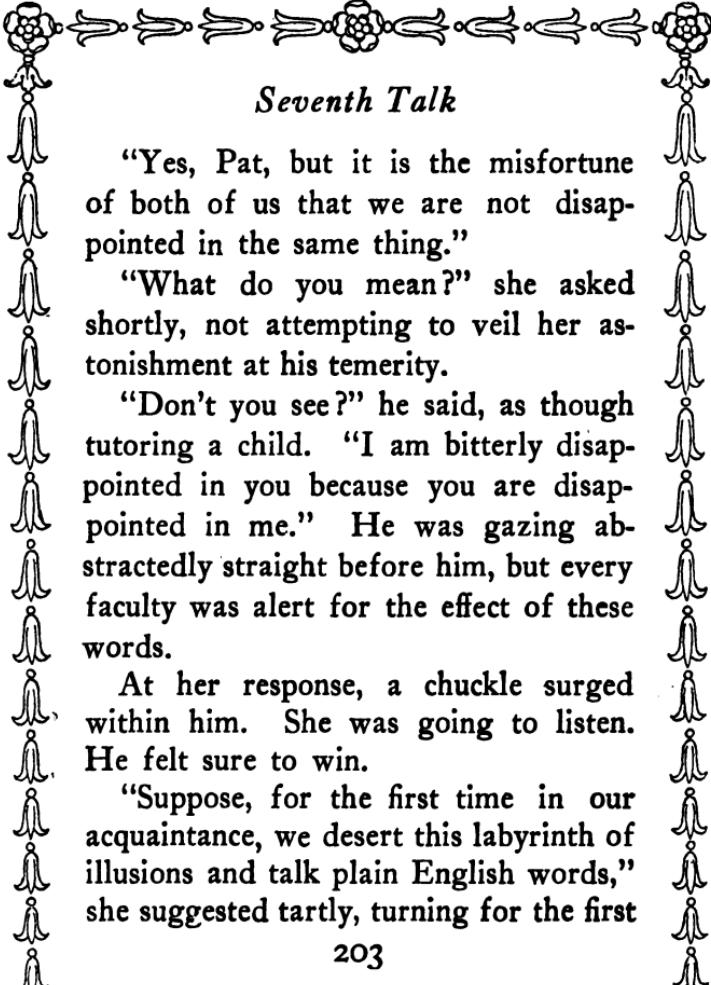
She was a dear old lady, and her remark was only the irony of ignorance.

As a stage for the recital of his defense, the man chose the short walk from the car line to the home of the maid.

For the first few paces an oppressive silence reigned. The maid did not seem inspired with ideas to lubricate the occasion. But nothing pleased this man better than to furnish his own opportunities for his own remarks.

"Perhaps I have expected too much of you," he began, his voice laboring to be brave. "I am disappointed."

"So am I," she said. Her manner did not encourage progression.



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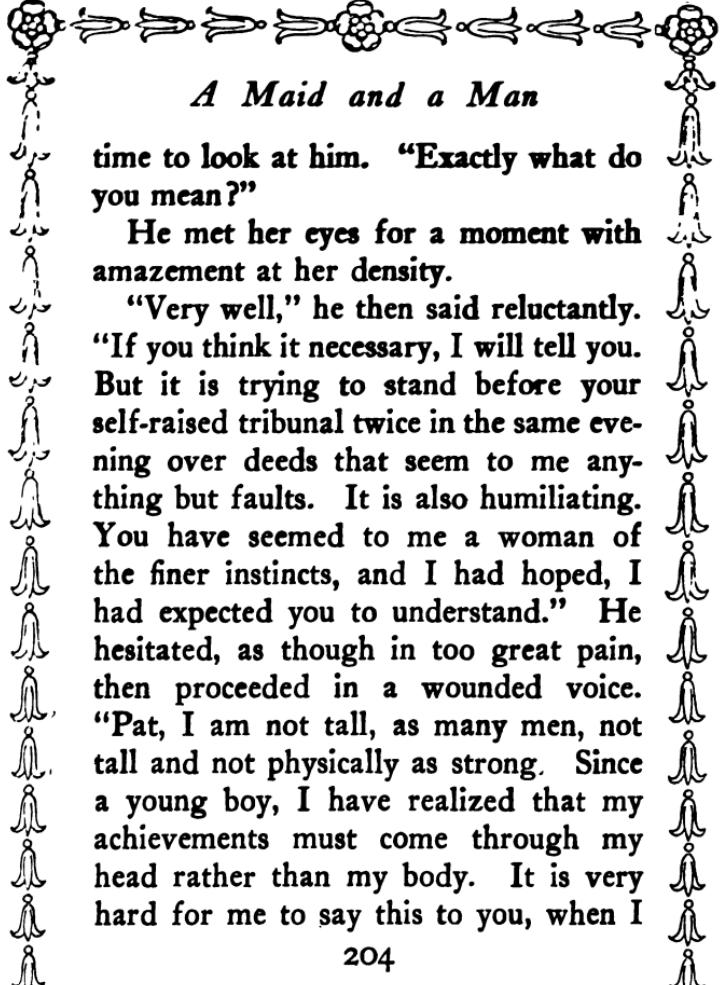
"Yes, Pat, but it is the misfortune of both of us that we are not disappointed in the same thing."

"What do you mean?" she asked shortly, not attempting to veil her astonishment at his temerity.

"Don't you see?" he said, as though tutoring a child. "I am bitterly disappointed in you because you are disappointed in me." He was gazing abstractedly straight before him, but every faculty was alert for the effect of these words.

At her response, a chuckle surged within him. She was going to listen. He felt sure to win.

"Suppose, for the first time in our acquaintance, we desert this labyrinth of illusions and talk plain English words," she suggested tartly, turning for the first



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time to look at him. "Exactly what do you mean?"

He met her eyes for a moment with amazement at her density.

"Very well," he then said reluctantly. "If you think it necessary, I will tell you. But it is trying to stand before your self-raised tribunal twice in the same evening over deeds that seem to me anything but faults. It is also humiliating. You have seemed to me a woman of the finer instincts, and I had hoped, I had expected you to understand." He hesitated, as though in too great pain, then proceeded in a wounded voice. "Pat, I am not tall, as many men, not tall and not physically as strong. Since a young boy, I have realized that my achievements must come through my head rather than my body. It is very hard for me to say this to you, when I



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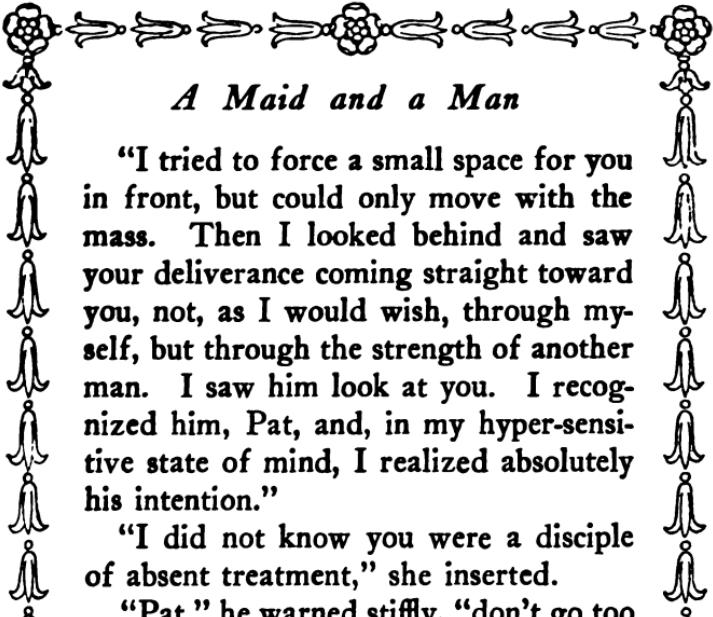
care so much—so much.” His words stumbled and stopped.

“Yes?” she urged. Despite herself, she began to feel vaguely sorry for him and distrustful of herself.

“When that mass of human flesh closed in about us, I felt overcome by a fainting sensation which is a heritage. My mind was all centred upon you, maddened to immediately rescue you from your miseries, but my body swayed and would not be controlled.”

“Then whence came your sudden access of vigor?” she sneered, thus brought face to face again with the cause of her resentment. His hand on her arm stiffened, as though with repulsion.

“You need not add brutality to your lack of perception and faith,” he said, then proceeded rapidly with his seemingly distasteful task.



A Maid and a Man

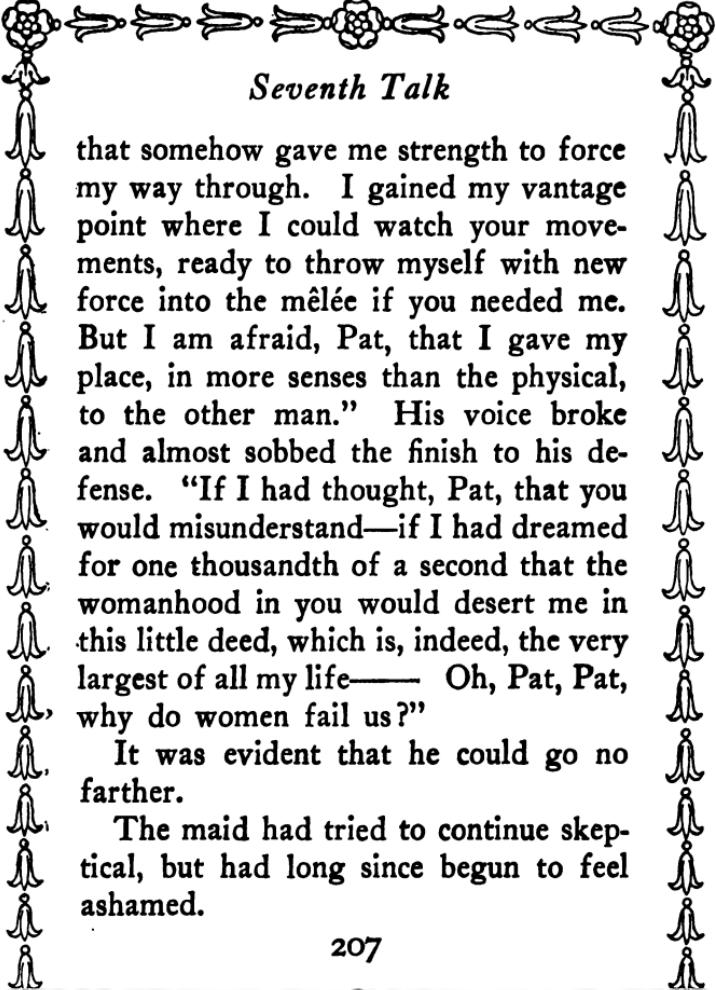
"I tried to force a small space for you in front, but could only move with the mass. Then I looked behind and saw your deliverance coming straight toward you, not, as I would wish, through myself, but through the strength of another man. I saw him look at you. I recognized him, Pat, and, in my hyper-sensitive state of mind, I realized absolutely his intention."

"I did not know you were a disciple of absent treatment," she inserted.

"Pat," he warned stiffly, "don't go too far."

"But why——?" she cried, still urged by her doubt.

He interrupted rapidly. "Why didn't I stay to help, Pat? Because the space I occupied was of more value to you than my small strength. I could help you more by leaving. It was this thought



Seventh Talk

that somehow gave me strength to force my way through. I gained my vantage point where I could watch your movements, ready to throw myself with new force into the mêlée if you needed me. But I am afraid, Pat, that I gave my place, in more senses than the physical, to the other man.” His voice broke and almost sobbed the finish to his defense. “If I had thought, Pat, that you would misunderstand—if I had dreamed for one thousandth of a second that the womanhood in you would desert me in this little deed, which is, indeed, the very largest of all my life— Oh, Pat, Pat, why do women fail us?”

It was evident that he could go no farther.

The maid had tried to continue sceptical, but had long since begun to feel ashamed.



A Maid and a Man

"Then," she said, with scorn still in her words, but an eager note in her voice, "you claim to possess a courage even greater than bodily courage!"

They had reached the door of her home and stood regarding one another.

The man raised his hands, as though to ward off a blow.

"Don't, don't," he implored. "Don't crucify my idea of you."

"Perhaps your explanation is all true," she began.

"Perhaps?" he questioned, in his hurt way.

"Probably it is true," she altered.

"Probably, Pat?" He claimed and won her searching regard. "Probably?" he repeated.

"Tommy, 'Sentimental Tommy,'" she said, suddenly doffing the manner she had worn and revealing in its place the



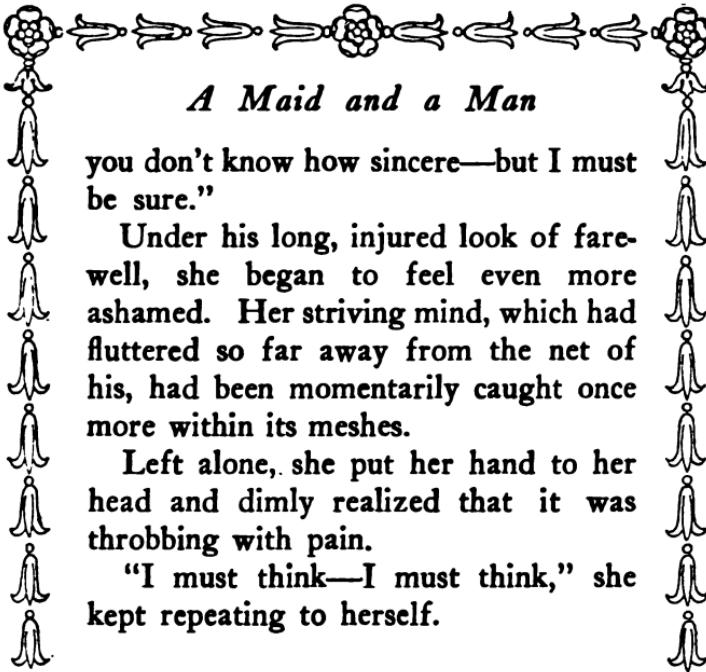


Seventh Talk

sweet sincerity that was, after all, her truest trait, "I cannot say now that I believe you because I do not know. It is too soon. It seems to me a good deal to ask of a girl."

He drew himself to his fullest height. "I have not asked it of 'a girl,' Pat. I have asked it of you. But you make me feel that I have overrated you. If you did not trust in me from the first, if it was not the intuitive womanhood in you that accepted me wholesale in the beginning of our rather unconventional friendship, then why, why have you given me these hours of your time, these eternities of yourself?"

The maid laughed nervously. "I don't seem to be very good at these unexpected results," she said. Then at once she relapsed into gravity. "Don't hurry me, Tommy," she begged. "I am sincere—



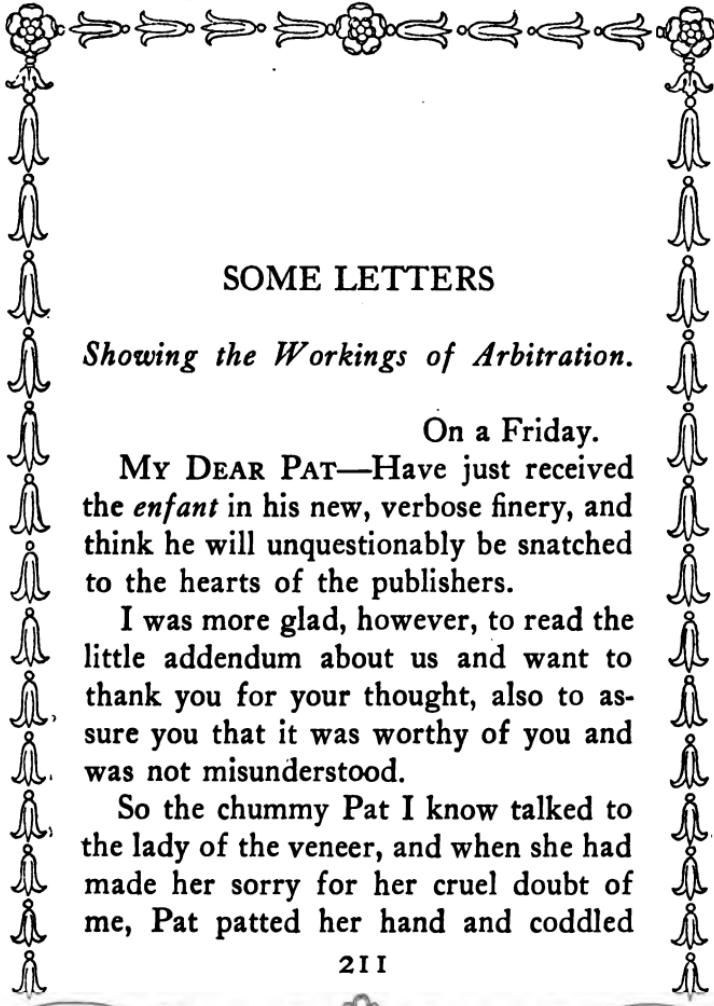
A Maid and a Man

you don't know how sincere—but I must be sure."

Under his long, injured look of farewell, she began to feel even more ashamed. Her striving mind, which had fluttered so far away from the net of his, had been momentarily caught once more within its meshes.

Left alone, she put her hand to her head and dimly realized that it was throbbing with pain.

"I must think—I must think," she kept repeating to herself.



SOME LETTERS

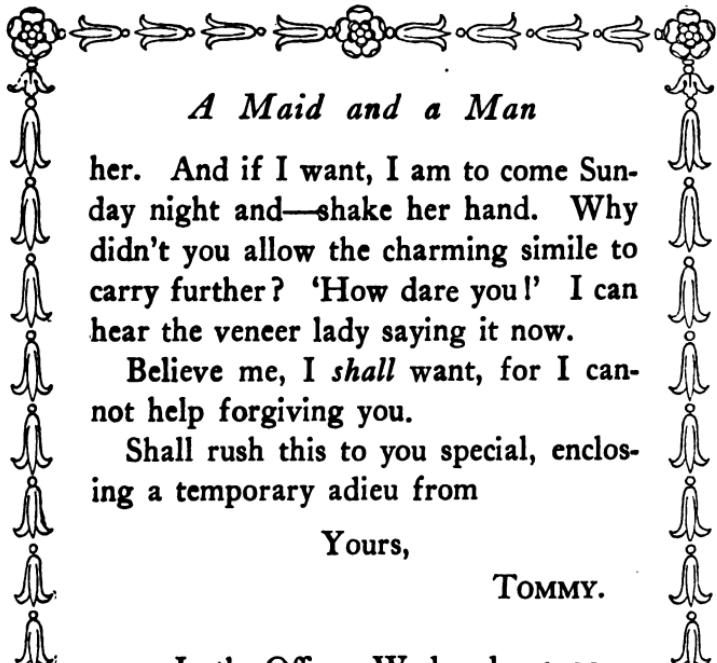
Showing the Workings of Arbitration.

On a Friday.

MY DEAR PAT—Have just received the *enfant* in his new, verbose finery, and think he will unquestionably be snatched to the hearts of the publishers.

I was more glad, however, to read the little addendum about us and want to thank you for your thought, also to assure you that it was worthy of you and was not misunderstood.

So the chummy Pat I know talked to the lady of the veneer, and when she had made her sorry for her cruel doubt of me, Pat patted her hand and coddled



A Maid and a Man

her. And if I want, I am to come Sunday night and—shake her hand. Why didn't you allow the charming simile to carry further? 'How dare you!' I can hear the veneer lady saying it now.

Believe me, I *shall* want, for I cannot help forgiving you.

Shall rush this to you special, enclosing a temporary adieu from

Yours,

TOMMY.

In the Office—Wednesday A. M.

PAT DEAR—To say that I have about run the gauntlet, Lady, with this precocious spring heat, my work and my disappointments, is putting it mildly, and I want to tell Pat all about it, if she will forgive and allow me.

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Some Letters

Went on Sunday up the river in a shell, with the idea of freshening myself for our reunion. Had figured on making the wharf in plenty of time to take a shower and then ask Pat to sup with me, but a broken out-rigger kept us in the fog until the lights were flashing from the bridge. We were forced to scull for eternities and it was 10:30 before Tommy, much blistered and sore, reached the burg.

It seems that I must forever stand in an unbecoming light before you, and I have been tardy in begging your pardon, but surely, after my vaster crimes, you will not accuse me of so small a sin as intentional courtesy.

May I see you to-night? We can ride to a bench set somewhere out in the world and chat a bit. Do not punish

A Maid and a Man

me for misfortune. If I may come, do not reply and I shall know.

Yours in suspense,

TOMMY.

Wednesday Noon.

MY DEAR THOMAS—Your catalogue of misfortunes was probably fore-ordained by its creator to touch the hardest heart, and it must seem rather unfeeling of me to have my evening previously provided for.

However, your sense of righteousness in the matter will doubtless alleviate any disappointment sustained.

Believe me,

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH LUSK.

The man read this letter with more of emotion than he usually wasted, when





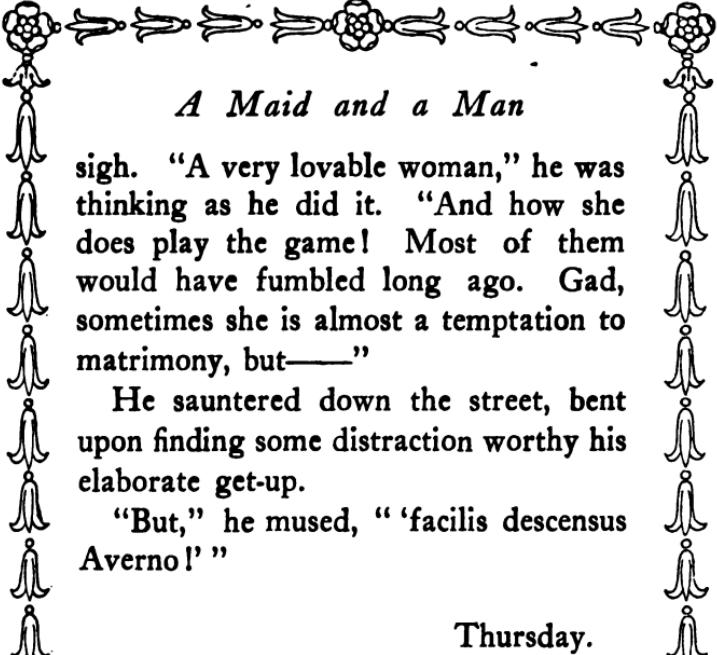
Some Letters

serving alone as his own audience. He pressed the dainty missive to his face.

"Distinctly characteristic," he said in his thoughts. "Odd, the way she writes the date across the back side of the envelope, but certainly gives an impression of overflowing versatility. And the haphazard way she dots her 'i's' is adorably racy. The hurry about the whole extravagant scrawl makes a fellow wonder whether she did her thinking before or after she wrote it."

He whipped his shoe impatiently with his cane. "It certainly is vindictive of her to have it reach me by special delivery just as I am about to amble up, but then I suppose she *didn't* exactly enjoy waiting Sunday night. Circumstances have been against me and I have been beastly slothful, that's a fact."

He settled his beautiful cravat with a



A Maid and a Man

sigh. "A very lovable woman," he was thinking as he did it. "And how she does play the game! Most of them would have fumbled long ago. Gad, sometimes she is almost a temptation to matrimony, but——"

He sauntered down the street, bent upon finding some distraction worthy his elaborate get-up.

"But," he mused, "'facilis descensus Averno!'"

Thursday.

PAT—I do not consider your note worthy of you, nor fair to me. When one man tells another he lies, one or the other generally gets hurt. In this case, however, you only wounded in the telling because it was you who told. Your second doubt has hurt more, if pos-



Some Letters

sible, than your first. In justice to myself, I can only say that I told the Pat I thought I knew the bald facts of the case, and she has proven her candid bravery by saying, 'I don't believe you.'

And so I still wear the tag I have tried so hard to lose? Perchance it is a blow to my pride, as my feelings and better self evidently figure outside.

If you ever care to ask me why, then believe me,

Yours,

TOMMY.

Sunday.

MY DEAR THOMAS—I cannot understand why you neglect to return the little misfit bundle of rhymes, dear to my soul, for which I have besought you twice with a humility frayed almost to tatters.

Doubtless you have some glorifying



A Maid and a Man

'Tommy' concept of your own concerning your mode of procedure. Perhaps it is the idea that everything comes to him who waits and retains. I confess it beyond my mental scope.

If it is that you wish to bring them, that might be arranged by arbitration. You are most prominently a diplomat, you know.

Otherwise, why would not a neat bundle with an adhering stamp do the work? I ask for information and, incidentally, my papers.

Very sincerely,

ELIZABETH LUSK.

Monday P. M.

MY DEAR PAT—No, there was no method in my seeming madness, and I shall return your papers to you to-mor-

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Some Letters

row, they not being at hand, but at home. I cannot ask to bring them, since your candor has made me appreciate my own limitations.

Although I am not the crying kind, I feel the implied loss of the many good hours with you which I so keenly appreciated. Eleven whole days since— Well, I was ever strong on comforting memories.

I beg you to believe me, in spite of the rude shadows, now and afterwards, as before,

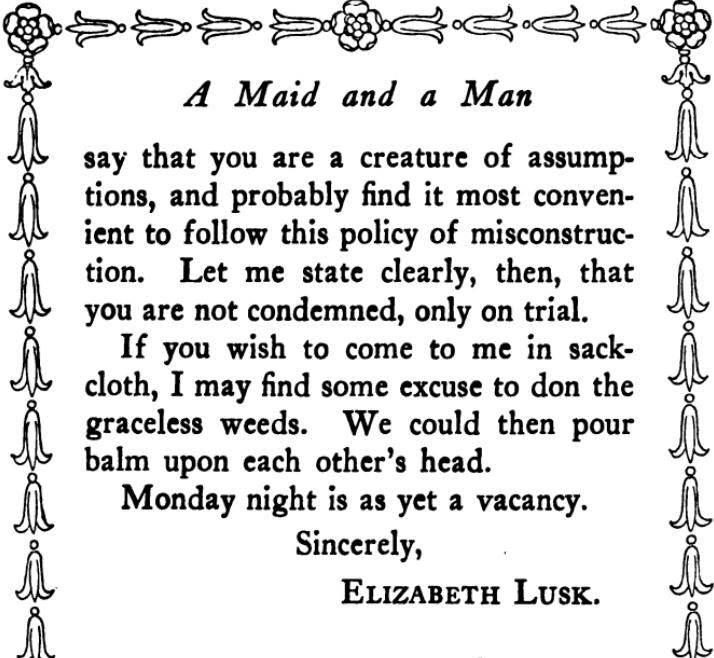
Yours to beckon,

TOMMY.

Friday Evening.

MY DEAR THOMAS—I wish to thank you amiably for returning the papers.

In regard to other things, can only



A Maid and a Man

say that you are a creature of assumptions, and probably find it most convenient to follow this policy of misconstruction. Let me state clearly, then, that you are not condemned, only on trial.

If you wish to come to me in sack-cloth, I may find some excuse to don the graceless weeds. We could then pour balm upon each other's head.

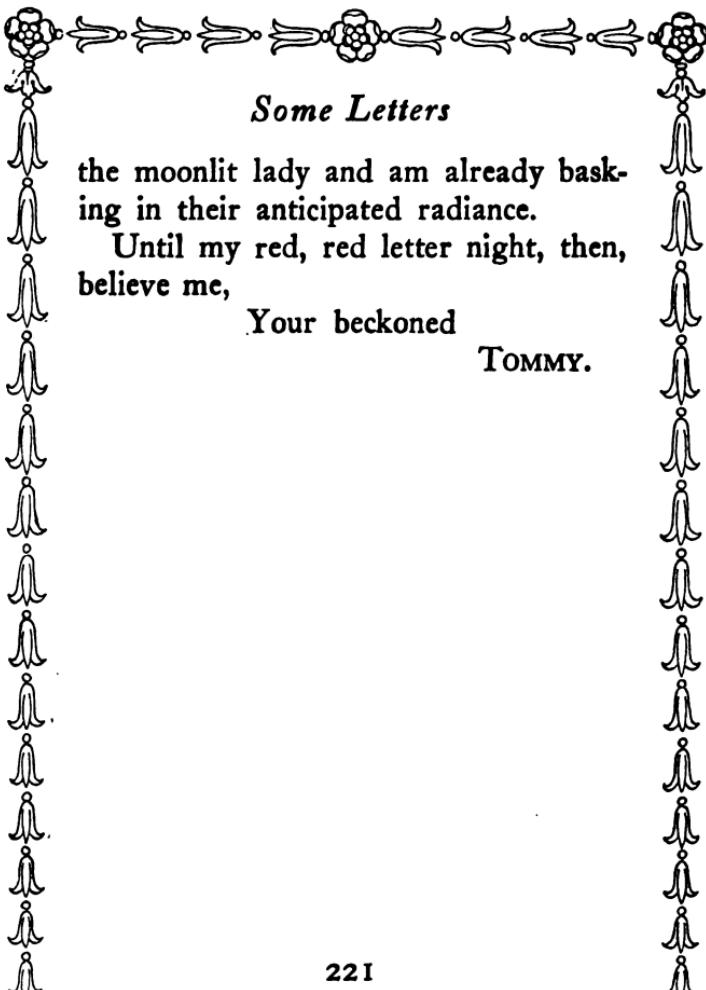
Monday night is as yet a vacancy.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH LUSK.

Saturday.

MY DEAR PAT—Feeling as one grateful for crumbs, I seize at the proffered Monday. If the night is fine, could we not steam down the river? We could toddle out beneath the sky, you know. I can imagine the sad, sweet smiles of



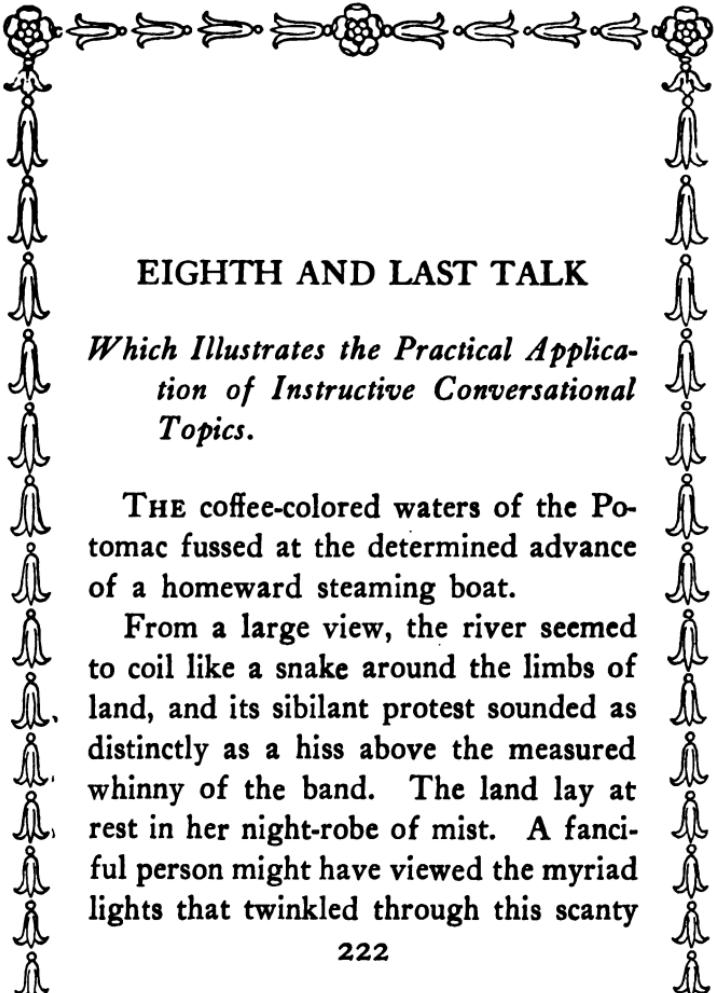
Some Letters

the moonlit lady and am already basking in their anticipated radiance.

Until my red, red letter night, then,
believe me,

Your beckoned

TOMMY.



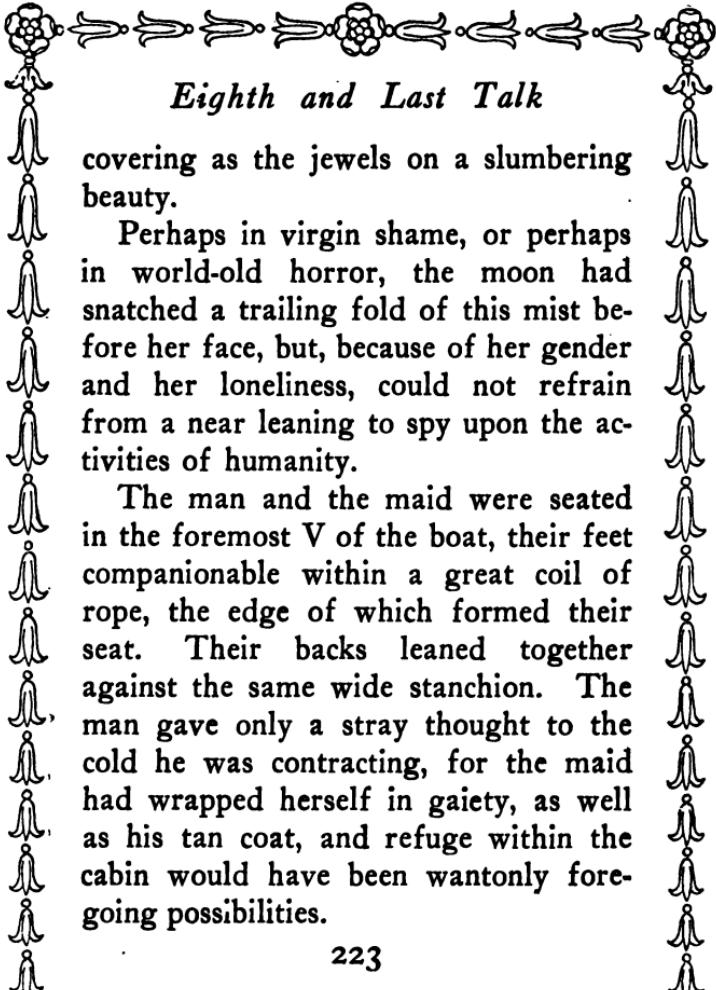
EIGHTH AND LAST TALK

Which Illustrates the Practical Application of Instructive Conversational Topics.

THE coffee-colored waters of the Potomac fussed at the determined advance of a homeward steaming boat.

From a large view, the river seemed to coil like a snake around the limbs of land, and its sibilant protest sounded as distinctly as a hiss above the measured whinny of the band. The land lay at rest in her night-robe of mist. A fanciful person might have viewed the myriad lights that twinkled through this scanty





Eighth and Last Talk

covering as the jewels on a slumbering beauty.

Perhaps in virgin shame, or perhaps in world-old horror, the moon had snatched a trailing fold of this mist before her face, but, because of her gender and her loneliness, could not refrain from a near leaning to spy upon the activities of humanity.

The man and the maid were seated in the foremost V of the boat, their feet companionable within a great coil of rope, the edge of which formed their seat. Their backs leaned together against the same wide stanchion. The man gave only a stray thought to the cold he was contracting, for the maid had wrapped herself in gaiety, as well as his tan coat, and refuge within the cabin would have been wantonly foregoing possibilities.



A Maid and a Man

Although the radius of their isolation was so limited that a short tape would have spanned it, they felt that rare delight at being comparatively alone which city people are so seldom privileged to know.

"The night is a bit of lead that solders together two glittering days," said the man, slowly enough to glory in the thought.

The maid seemed irreverent. "The night," she gurgled, "is a shadow cast by the hands of all the universe raised in horror at the sentimentality of men."

"And the river," he pursued, "is a trickling stream of molten lead that has escaped."

"Nature would never employ so wasteful a tinker," she objected. "The night is feminine because she is so—"

"Don't dare to say it," he interrupted.



Eighth and Last Talk

"You are pointing to the fallacy in your own argument."

"So economical," she continued, lifting a hand that silenced his words by raising a new desire in his thoughts. "See how meager the light of the moon and how few stars there are. She will not waste even her candles! And she has wrapped them all in cheese-cloth to keep off the specks."

"The mist must have reached your brain, for you are all wrong," he said absently, his mind still with the tempting palm that had withdrawn into its immense cuff. "The fog is only a vapor that escapes from the tank where the witches are brewing malaria."

"Poor old gentleman," she pitied. "We are going in at once—at once!" Then she settled herself more comfort-



A Maid and a Man

ably, with a breath of intense contentment.

He turned a chaste smile upon her. "Considering what an enormous amphitheatre the world is, we have seemed pretty snug to-night."

"We are in a box with the curtains down," she essayed. "We can revel in the opera of the night, shielded from the vulgar stare."

"Then give me your hand, Pat," he begged, and forcefully granted his own request. "It feels like a fish, but still—"

"If it feels like a fish, Tommy, then it is not the hand for you to hold," she asserted with severity. "Meditating upon the extra number of women in the world and how each one has two hands, it would seem that every man ought to



"Then it is not the hand for you to hold," she asserted

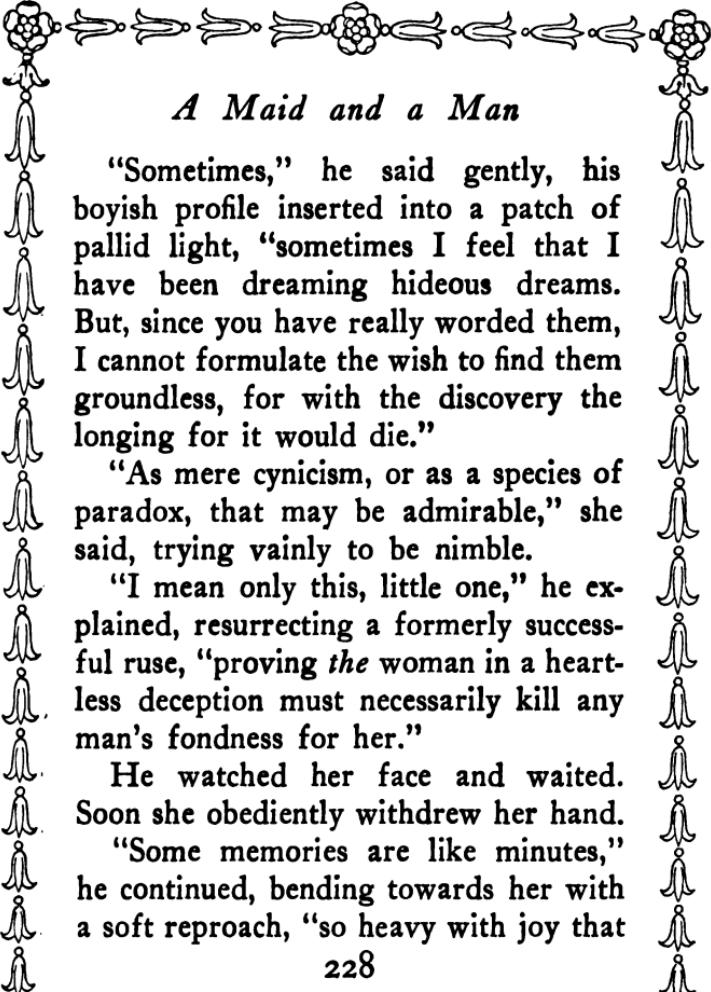
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Eighth and Last Talk

find at least one that will warm to his touch."

"I think I could warm it, Pat," he said, with a wistful intake of breath, although vastly surprised that she did not withdraw it. He recalled with speedy concern her radiance of the evening, and synthesized as a continuance of her mood this effervescent satisfaction, her happy eyes, her easy laughs. In an essentially abstract way, she showed a sort of cuddling propensity. Never before had she seemed so irresistibly to snuggle against his instincts. It was suspiciously un-Patlike. The occasion required self-denial, and he tried to glue his mental eye warily upon three danger signals, the environments, the woman in her, and himself. He donned an abstemious manner that was infinitely more touching than any violent avowal.



A Maid and a Man

"Sometimes," he said gently, his boyish profile inserted into a patch of pallid light, "sometimes I feel that I have been dreaming hideous dreams. But, since you have really worded them, I cannot formulate the wish to find them groundless, for with the discovery the longing for it would die."

"As mere cynicism, or as a species of paradox, that may be admirable," she said, trying vainly to be nimble.

"I mean only this, little one," he explained, resurrecting a formerly successful ruse, "proving *the woman* in a heartless deception must necessarily kill any man's fondness for her."

He watched her face and waited. Soon she obediently withdrew her hand.

"Some memories are like minutes," he continued, bending towards her with a soft reproach, "so heavy with joy that



Eighth and Last Talk

they stop the hour-glass of one's life. Perhaps time does go on to others, but it does not matter. You might give me some minutes to remember to-night, Pat."

For the first time that evening, her laugh was discordant. She was angry with herself because, being so evidently and innately dense, she could not be at peace with her limitations, and jealous of him because, as it was granted to only one of them to scientifically count the pulses of the situation, the choice must needs be cast to him.

"Flattery is often palatable," she observed flippantly, "but it is a trifle extravagant to credit me with omnipotence. Only clocks, assisted by the Almighty, can make the minutes."

He drew from her with an assumption of vague distaste.



A Maid and a Man

"The queen stoops to clown it," he said.

The sizes of our souls regulate our mental and spiritual breathing. The maid had often noticed how the Maker of man, the greatest of tailors, neglects many times to put any of these gutta-percha bands in the sides of some. At the moment, it seemed to her that her soul was a size eighteen, laced tight, absolutely without expansion. But with the next, her life-time of self-respect declared it a misfit and, swelling with the vinous breath of a deliberate plan, she burst its bounds.

She stiffened her mood and her body with tense earnestness, resolved to indisputably conquer this situation and this man.



Eighth and Last Talk

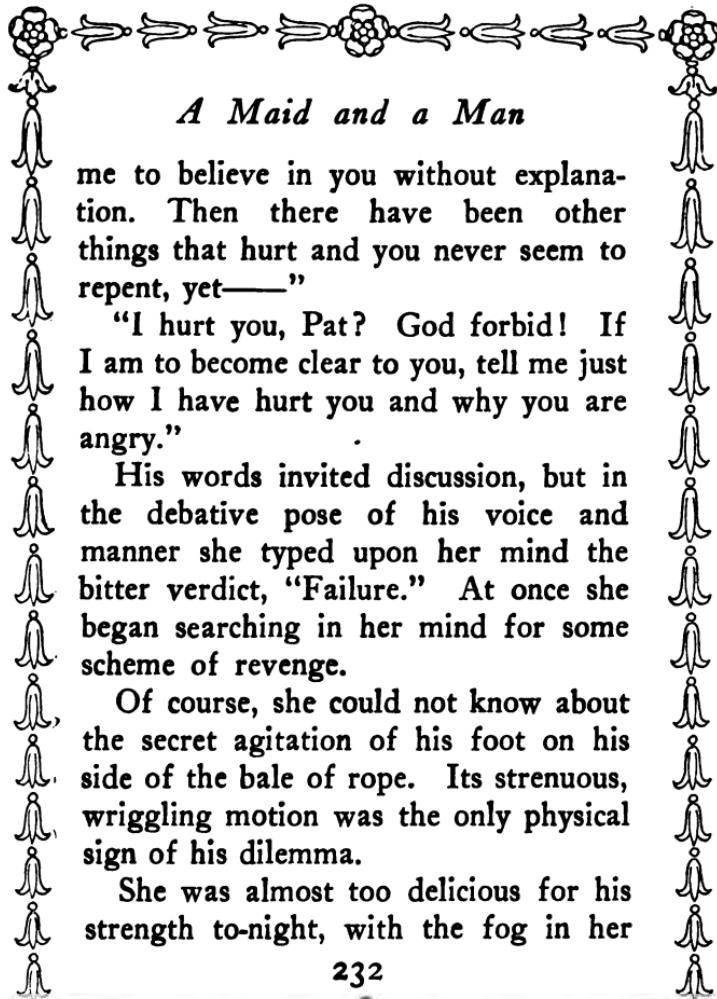
"I have avoided the topic of ourselves to-night because I have been bent upon enjoyment, but I am really very angry with you, Thomas. You are too capricious for a man, too uncertain, you know. You have behaved wretchedly to me. I—" Her voice seemed to trip. For a moment her face was turned away and her hands clung together nervously.

He peered into her face, thirsty for the elixir of emotions, yet trying to forego the cup.

"You what, Pat?" he asked.

"Why, sometimes," she continued, in a very small and limping voice, noting with a slender glance the signs of his face, "sometimes I have wished to understand you a little better, Tommy. You have acted very strangely according to my code of a man, and expect





A Maid and a Man

me to believe in you without explanation. Then there have been other things that hurt and you never seem to repent, yet——”

“I hurt you, Pat? God forbid! If I am to become clear to you, tell me just how I have hurt you and why you are angry.”

His words invited discussion, but in the debative pose of his voice and manner she typed upon her mind the bitter verdict, “Failure.” At once she began searching in her mind for some scheme of revenge.

Of course, she could not know about the secret agitation of his foot on his side of the bale of rope. Its strenuous, wriggling motion was the only physical sign of his dilemma.

She was almost too delicious for his strength to-night, with the fog in her



Eighth and Last Talk

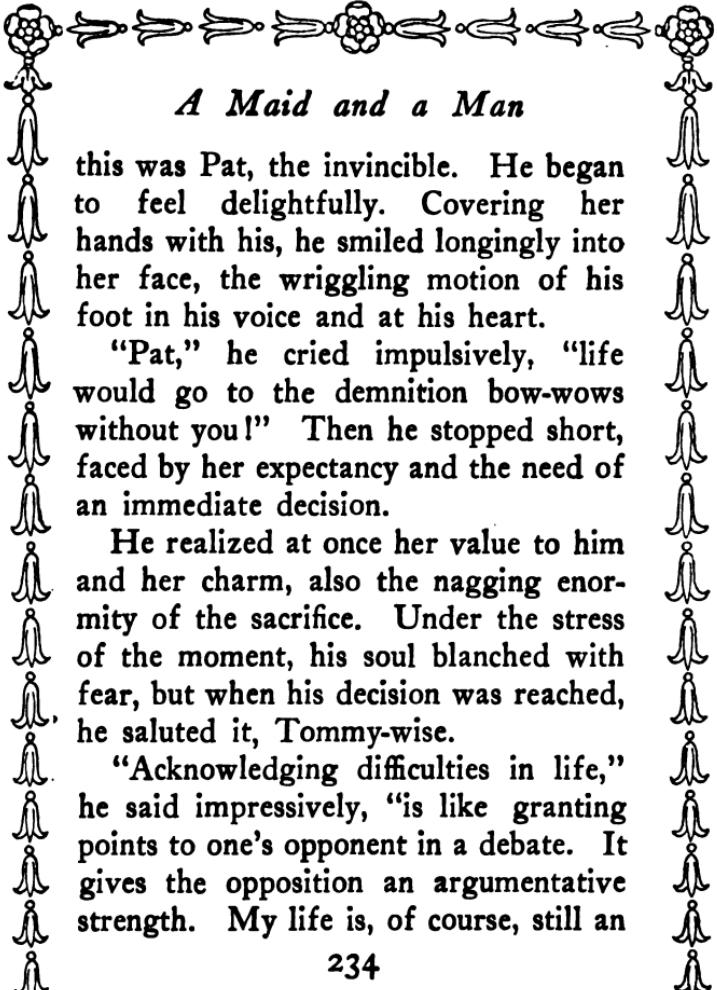
hair, the suggestions in her voice and eyes and the softness of her wooing mood. But an analytic strength came to his aid. In a Pat who really felt as tragic as she appeared to feel, there would be no outward sign. Relieved by this thought, he pursued the game.

"Won't you tell me why?" he urged, assuming the eager attitude of the question.

The maid laughed wickedly and sincerely.

"Why, I—I don't remember," she cried, with an air of false confusion. "I did know. Had it all jotted down, but my memory is about as long as one-half inch of rubber—stretched. Anyhow, I am so happy to-night that I don't intend to care."

If the man was tempted before, he was overwhelmed now. This was real;



A Maid and a Man

this was Pat, the invincible. He began to feel delightfully. Covering her hands with his, he smiled longingly into her face, the wriggling motion of his foot in his voice and at his heart.

"Pat," he cried impulsively, "life would go to the demnition bow-wows without you!" Then he stopped short, faced by her expectancy and the need of an immediate decision.

He realized at once her value to him and her charm, also the nagging enormity of the sacrifice. Under the stress of the moment, his soul blanched with fear, but when his decision was reached, he saluted it, Tommy-wise.

"Acknowledging difficulties in life," he said impressively, "is like granting points to one's opponent in a debate. It gives the opposition an argumentative strength. My life is, of course, still an



Eighth and Last Talk

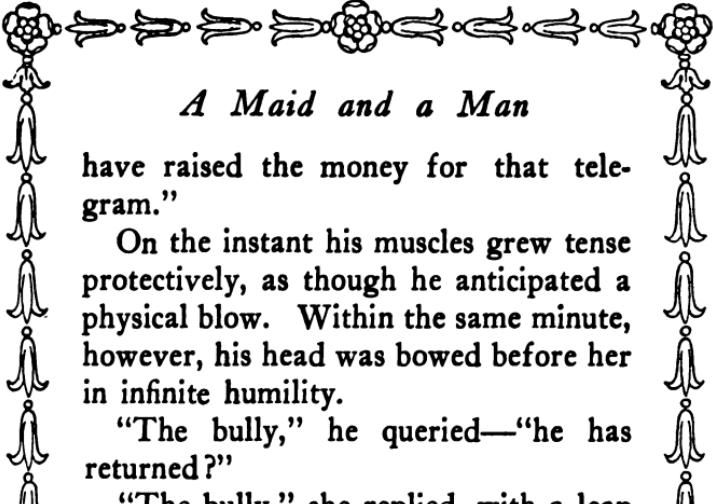
argument, but you, Pat, are no longer a difficulty to me."

It was not, however, until they were approaching their good-night on the steps of her home that he deemed the moment ripe for announcing to her her election. As he was choosing worthy words for this asking her to share his life, the calamity in what she was saying began to penetrate his thoughts.

"Besides being good-night, this may be good-by, Thomas, although that depends largely upon yourself."

"It may be good-by," he repeated. "It may be good-by. That sounds like the refrain in some popular song, but, if you are in earnest, it does not feel that way."

"Tommy," said the maid softly, "knowing you has made me so rich. I



A Maid and a Man

have raised the money for that telegram."

On the instant his muscles grew tense protectively, as though he anticipated a physical blow. Within the same minute, however, his head was bowed before her in infinite humility.

"The bully," he queried—"he has returned?"

"The bully," she replied, with a leap in her voice, "will soon be here."

An explaining ray shot into the mind of the man.

"I noticed in the paper to-night that Banks was expected in town on business to-morrow."

"I saw that paragraph, too," she said, veiling the maliciousness in her eyes. "I hope you will not lose your position through him."

"I fancy I have already lost it, Pat,"



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he replied, with the simple manner that comes to some people in catastrophe. "But it is good of you, and like you, dear, to wave me a farewell down the front steps of your life, instead of rudely putting me out at the back. I can never thank you for to-night. Of course, this had to come, and it is better that you should take the initiative, although I had decided to myself say the words to-night." He was quite unabashed at this sudden and radical alteration in his plans.

The plumes that had been waving so blithely above the moment, seemed to the maid drooping from a dextrous douche.

"You?" she questioned, incredulously.

"Yes, Pat. I am accustomed to progression and the torture of quiescence with you has been too great." For a



A Maid and a Man

moment he seemed deep in remembrances. "About those principles, Pat, have you thrown them in with the bargain?"

The maid beamed upon him with vixenish candor.

"Why, you see," she explained, "I have arbitrated. Besides being grateful for our several delightful larks, I am indebted to you for teaching me the steps in this process."

"Teaching you?" he said humbly. "Whatever in the world can you mean?"

"Yes," she insisted genially, "I have learned it all from you, fully enough to settle my whole future life."

"It has been such a very little while," he deprecated, modestly.

"I have learned," she said impressively, with her fingers poised in tabulation, "I have learned, in the first place,



Eighth and Last Talk

that successions are very complicated and require much painful readjustment."

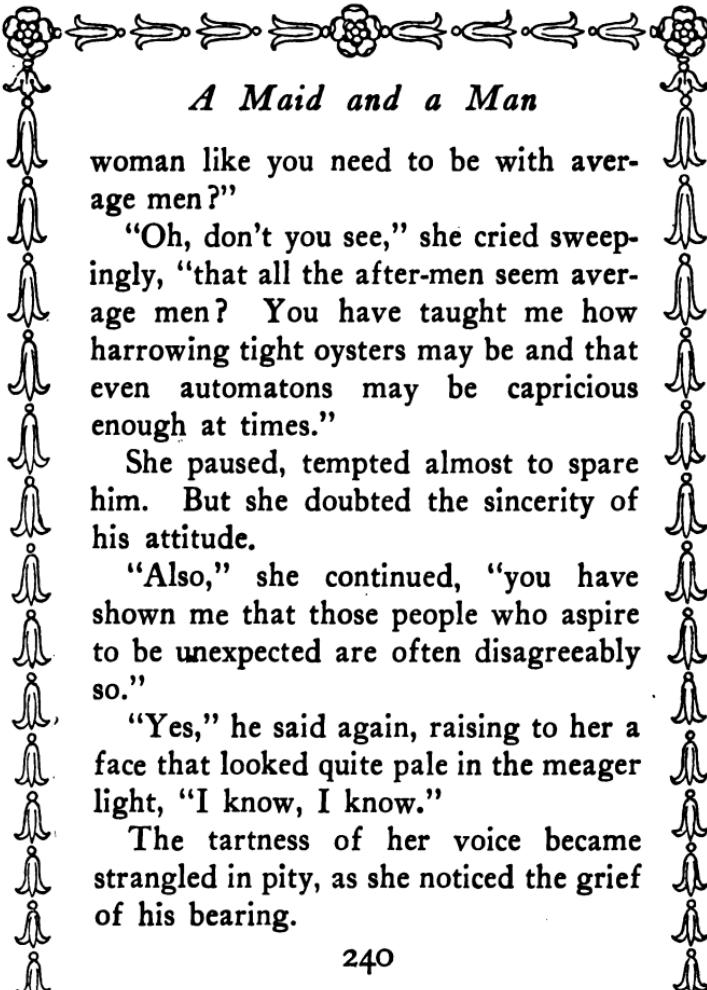
"Yes, I know," he said, gently.

"And I have learned, Tommy, that those men who habitually contract 'only women,' while most absorbing for the moment, are bound in time from their very nature to prove unstable."

"Habitually?" he repeated after her, with reproach.

"Thirdly," she progressed, with a spark in her eye that it was not his right to see, "the reminiscences of a sincere affair are lighted bits of punk that won't go out. They often illumine the present situation painfully, and make it hard for a woman to meet the uncomfortable requirements of the average men."

"But," he inserted, with the faintest possible edge to his voice, "does a



A Maid and a Man

woman like you need to be with average men?"

"Oh, don't you see," she cried sweepingly, "that all the after-men seem average men? You have taught me how harrowing tight oysters may be and that even automatons may be capricious enough at times."

She paused, tempted almost to spare him. But she doubted the sincerity of his attitude.

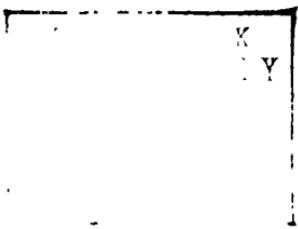
"Also," she continued, "you have shown me that those people who aspire to be unexpected are often disagreeably so."

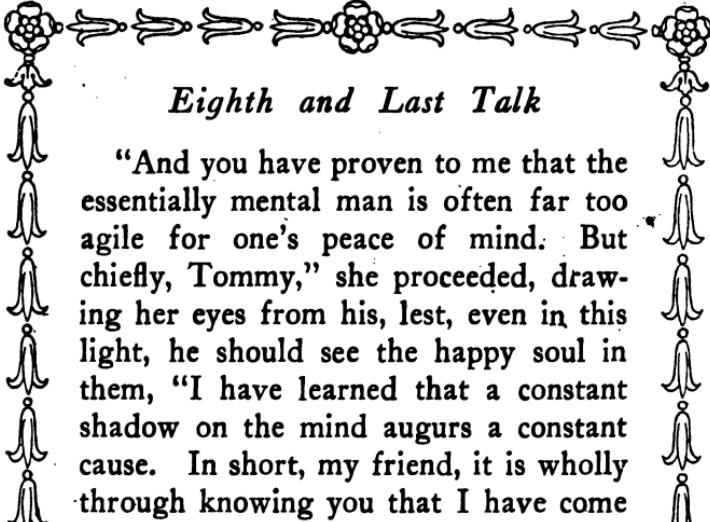
"Yes," he said again, raising to her a face that looked quite pale in the meager light, "I know, I know."

The tartness of her voice became strangled in pity, as she noticed the grief of his bearing.



The Other Chap





Eighth and Last Talk

"And you have proven to me that the essentially mental man is often far too agile for one's peace of mind. But chiefly, Tommy," she proceeded, drawing her eyes from his, lest, even in this light, he should see the happy soul in them, "I have learned that a constant shadow on the mind augurs a constant cause. In short, my friend, it is wholly through knowing you that I have come to realize how essentially satisfactory is the simple mind of a normal man."

"To think of her being such a melodramatic child," he murmured, as though forgetting her presence utterly. "Carried away by the hero and the feather in his hat!"

She started impulsively as though to defend herself, then straightened and finished coldly.

"You have helped me through a



A Maid and a Man

period of experiment. Even though it has failed, I am none the less grateful to you."

"It would sound more loyal to the—the other chap to say that the experiment has *succeeded*," he chided.

For minutes she stood upon the steps, hearkening to the click of his footsteps, progressing down the sidewalk to the car. A grotesque face, carved in the pillar of the porch, leered down upon her pessimistically. The ghoulishness of the warm night wind made her shiver.

Why must we forever watch each other in the dark?

"Well, Tommy," she called after him in her mind, like most women being oppressed to speak her after-thought, "I have waved you down the front steps of



Eighth and Last Talk

my life, but it would perhaps have been wiser to be more rough, for I predict many a night when your face will peer in at my parlor window."

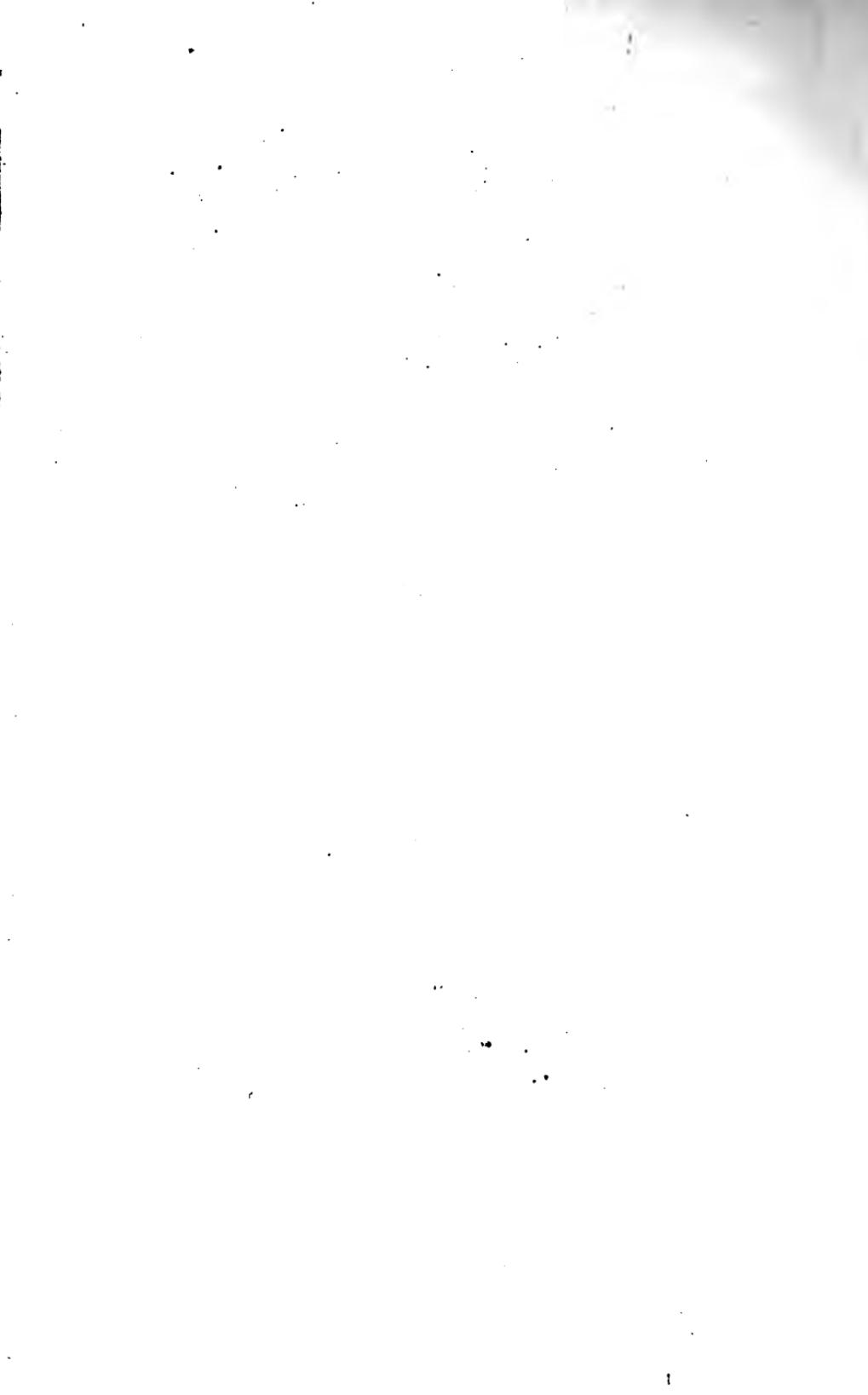
To the man, the metallic sounds of his heels upon the bricks began to telegraph a triumphant message.

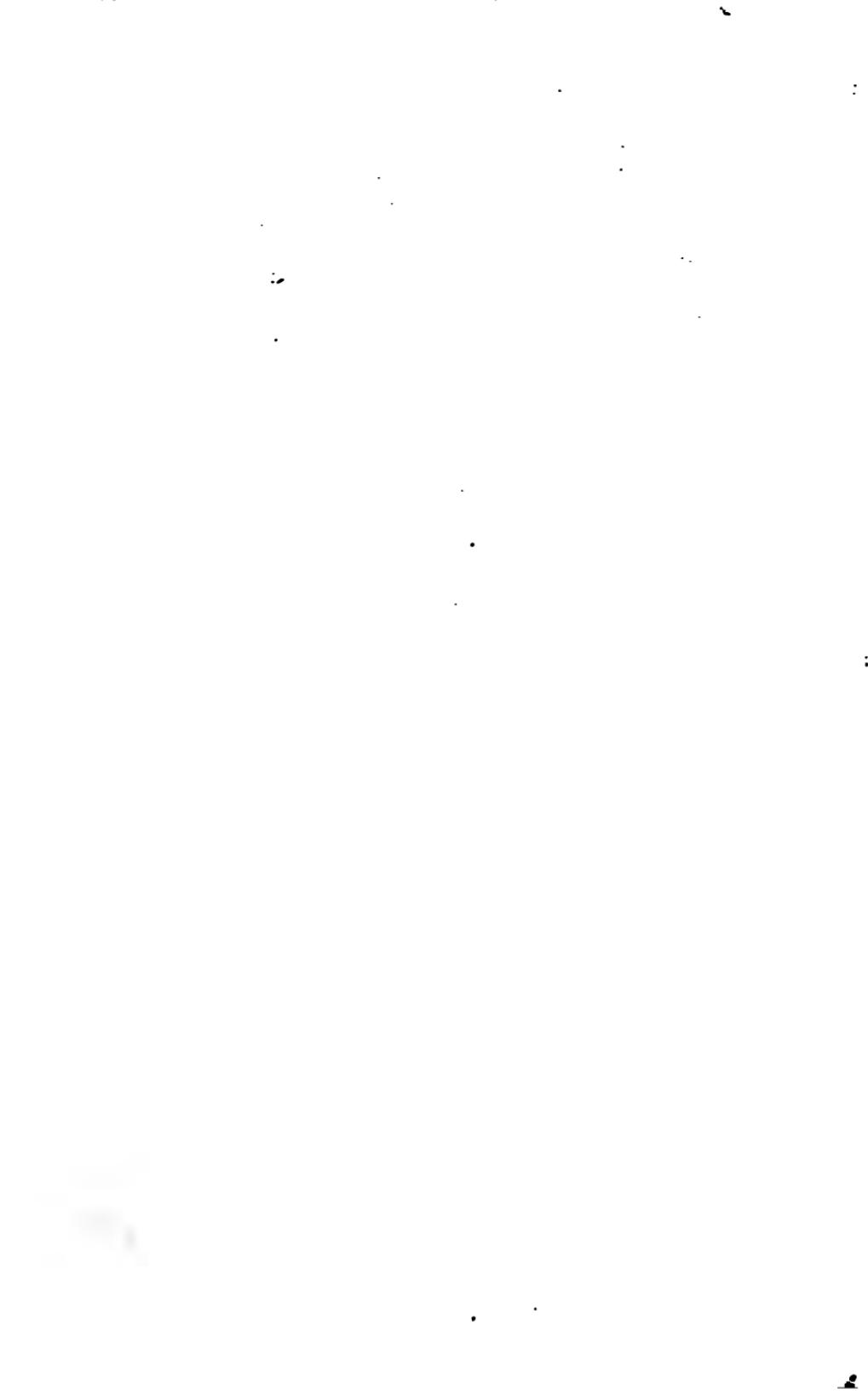
"Saved, saved!" they insinuated to his heart, and thus coddled, its sobs were already subdued.

THE END









S - April 11/1911

